

YE GODS AND
LITTLE FISHES



EUGENE E. SLOCUM



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By
EUGENE E. SLOCUM



New York
DODD, MEAD & COMPANY
1927

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Published September, 1927
Second printing December, 1927

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE VAIL-BALLOU PRESS, INC., BINGHAMTON, N. Y.

DEDICATED

To those ardent fishermen whose contemplation of the uncertain period of life is measured not by prosaic years but by the precious seasons which may yet be theirs to enjoy our trout-bejeweled earthly brooks.





A MESSAGE

The marvelous radio had been turned away from all known stations that it might explore unguided the mysteries of infinite space.

"Why sad, my worthy Venator? Do the ether waves distress you with their discord?" The words were strangely like those of Saint Isaak.

"Nay, good master, it is not that. My contemplative mood arises from my recollections, for once again the earth has reached the season we called springtime."

"Ah, yes. You speak of the northern latitudes. And yet, how much more blissful here where it is ever springtime! We need no longer arise by the lighted dip to pursue our mighty preparations, for here is always day, fresh with the fragrance of rarest blooms. And where, dear pupil, in Merrie England or 'mongst bonnie Scotland's hills had we such pure, cold streams so full of gallant trouts as the embowered brooklets of the Upper Styx?"

"Marry, dear master, is it then sinful that I pay tribute to the great bull trouts of the Northumber-

land when springtime there reminds me of the sphere of our novitiate? Of all the globes revolving roundabout us my ear attunes most fond to that from which we came, and the sweetest of all music are the discoursings of the anglers along the banks of our noble Itchen."

"Why, sir, it is not for me to chide you, more especial if you now lend your sympathetic ear to their wisdom and repeat their converse to me whilst I select from this gaudily marked bird of paradise our needful assortment of feathers and hackles."

"My master, your forbearance is ever grateful and I shall with attention hearken. The day there seems far spent. The fishermen have put aside their tacklings and now speak mainly of the big ones they have lost."

"Alas, I fear me they are but men who go a-fishing, for a skilled fisherman does not lose the big ones. List on."

"I hear nothing but the homeward tramp of tired feet. Now all is still. Very presently morn will break upon the continent that was but an infant when we left the earth. Ah, this will pleasure you, dear master. It seemeth the trouting season has but opened in some of the easternmost prov-

inces of the new country and all is excitement there."

" 'Tis comfort that our rugged pioneers carried the royal pastime to those distant shores and safeguarded it with our wise statutes. But do not let me interrupt. Proceed, then, with your wonted accuracy or more, kind scholar."

"Marry, good master, 'twould be beyond my power to depart from truth in my reports by e'en the shadow of an atom—for was I not, mark you well!—was I not admitted here because you avouched me a sportsman?"

"Well said indeed, my faithful pupil, member of the one guild that cannot lie."

"So, now. I hear a debate in the province of New York."

"Named, mayhap, from our own Plantagenets. Do they speak of the trouts in their debates?"

"I pray you, master, attend whilst their voices come to me so clear up the spiral wave. The higher reaches of the province seem blessed with verdant hills where shepherds tend their flocks 'long banks of mettly streams with trouts at play. How wondrous like our Taw and Torridge!"

"May God requite you, gentle scholar, for voicing fond thoughts of those dulcet brooks, though

we have better here. It joys my heart to mark your constancy. Is the argument a friendly one for learning?"

"Nay; more's the pity. There comes a great and heated clamor betwixt our brothers of the angle on the one side wishing to save their streams for fishing, and from men on the other side who seek to impound the waters and sell them to the townsmen for drink."

"Oh me! Wherein is gain to come from bartering trouts for water to drink? The most generous of all fish to the palate is of itself mostly water, hence yielding both to all proper desire. If these ill-favored people are not content to drink with their trouts a cup of good old barley wine or a brimming tankard of Highland brew, aye and then another, I fear me they are but a common lot. Ho, then, by the merciless cockatrice! For less offense the calm of Fotheringay Castle awaits with water as a just penalty and with bread instead of fish. These dullards reason with the brains of hopping toads. How dare these wayward progeny bespeck the tablets of our wise forefathers who preserved their health and gleaned philosophy for all posterity by eating of the gallant trouts and blessing them in good liquor! They so disturb my tranquil soul!"

"But, loving master, in the provinces they now have no more a fishing drink, and must perforce take water."

"No fishing drink! Of a verity, that cannot be! They have no honest ale-house! Tut! E'en the willing tyro knows full well that fish bite not save with fair accompaniment. And equal good, it much inspires the thinking mind to reach out far beyond the ken of drudgery and of commerce to gather from the wide firmament sparks of eternal truth for molding the destiny of mankind. In my brief stay on earth how prisoned would have been the walls of which you speak! How dwarfed to nothingness the latent gifts of my friends Dryden, Jonson and Shakespeare and of our toddling followers, Swift, Addison and Steele, had the flowing bowl been denied us! Speak, scholar; what brings about this sorry mess?"

"Good master, they are not to be chode. My mind is clear that it was from our own malcontents, our bigots, that these unfortunates sprung. But, tell me why are none of those Pharisees with us in our sphere of contentment? Whither could they have gone?"

"I pray you, scholar, do not ask. Let us think kindly of their unhappy souls wherever they may

be. Search not the scroll for their names lest we must spend our time in futile mourning. But my spirit is restless for these poor fishermen. To them I would speak a word of comfort. So, kind scholar, waft aside all ionized strata that my voice need not be raised to dissonance with the music of the angel choir about us.

"I speak from heaven to my brothers of the angle on earth. First, to you of the bonnie brooks and the chalky streams of Britain: I pledge you continued freedom to drink with honor as gentlemen while dispensing wisdom for the coming ages. You are still to hearken to my voice.

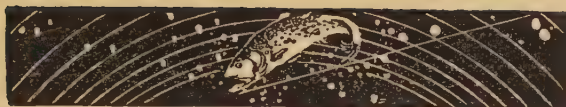
"Now to you who were begat of the Puritans and who have so far spurned the misguided path of your ancestors as to follow the lordly trouts into the wilderness e'en though deprived of just condiment: you are to know that here are unfading flowers of wondrous splendor, trees constantly in leaf, air that exhilarates like wine, streams of infinite number filled with powerful trouts such as no mortal has ever beheld, mossy banks deep and tender to caress the unshod feet, and our sustenance is an ambrosial bouquet of matchless aroma and effect far beyond me to describe or you to understand.

A MESSAGE

"Now to all anglers everywhere: I bid you at your leisure a hearty welcome to a day of happiness supreme, a day as endless as eternity.

"And now, faithful scholar, let us say a grace before you read to me the tales of one who hopes to go with us sometime a-fishing."





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PART FIRST





LOOKING BACKWARD

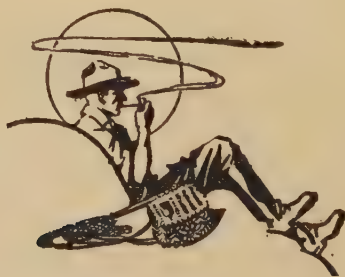
THREE years ago I made a special trip to secure a photograph of the little brook where I, as a tow-haired boy of seven, caught my first trout. While memory wandered to the June day fifty years before, I recalled how I had secured a can of gooey angleworms and had pattered with bare and pleurably dirty feet a mile or so of dusty roads in blissful anticipation.

From the motor car that brought me I could see the very spot in the open meadow where the greatest event of my life had taken place. Climbing over the roadside fence and approaching with quickened pulse the place which time had hallowed, I looked eagerly for the great log, which had remained indelibly photographed on my brain through all those intervening years, lying across a wide bend of mysterious depth close by a lone sentinel pine. To my amazement the log was not there! And by some strange alchemy of nature the towering pine of my youth had grown smaller instead of larger during a whole half century! Surely

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the quiet little run which trickled before me, muddied by its yield of scurrying tadpoles, could not be the same tumbling, boisterous stream that I had once known. How cruelly false was this time-wrinkled mirror which mocked my stupefied vision!

Such, alas, are the tricks that the recollections of childhood delight to play upon mature years. They, too, are the prankish miscreants which convince us that the old red schoolhouse is much larger than it ever was, and, though I will not believe it, perhaps they likewise lend an unreal glamour to "the pies that mother used to make." In spite of all, I still maintain that the trout which I captured from the deep hole under the mammoth log was the largest and most wonderful of all the fish that ever lived. At any rate, I have never since been so proud of a catch.





THE CALL OF THE STREAM

WHAT is so buoyant as contemplation of the first trouting trip of the season! Within the man who confesses guilt to his wife's accusation that he is crazy on the subject, the winter dormant germ starts fermentation mildly on the first day of January, for spring will be here soon; the calendar declares it; the arrival of the seedsman's new catalog confirms it. Filled with lavish contentment of a special holiday dinner, he settles down deep into a multi-cushioned chair which tenderly snuggles against every contact outline of his body. Glancing furtively at his indulgent critic to be sure that her mind is engrossed by her spring fashion magazine and the bonbons in her lap, he discreetly and guiltily draws from an inner pocket next his heart a small metal box which is fuller of hope than ever was Pandora's.

Each little fly is the work of a master craftsman; so registers the mental impression of this friendly connoisseur. He lifts out a dainty Professor to admire it more intimately with the feel of his sen-

sitive fingers. The fabled basilisk could have been no more deadly, he declares with an inaudible purr. Restoring that to its compartment, he then nestles a Cahill in the palm of his hand while admitting softly to himself that this, after all, is his favorite. In their turn he bestows the same impartial admiration upon the brilliant-bodied Royal Coachman, the fuzzy Hare's Ear, the modest Pale Evening Dun and every other of a dozen or more varieties. It is remarkable how soon he has forgotten a disappointing experience of only last summer when the Royal was to have been banned forever. But now as he sits in his warm, comfortable library looking through the frosted window he neither sees the stark skeletons of trees nor the drifting snow, nor does he hear the howling gale without. Instead, his curtained eyes clearly behold the wondrous green of spring, the rippling mountain stream and the rise of the big trout which he handily captures, for he has entered Elysian slumberland.

Once the wheel of time has reached the starting post, it spins so fast that renewals of all branches of the outfit have but just been completed when he hears the call of the siren, May. She comes with smiles and half-clothed charms to bewitch the

THE CALL OF THE STREAM

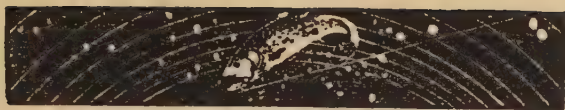
winter-weary slave from his labors. Whether he responds to her entreaties or, remembering her frowning moods, awaits the more dulcet voice of June, he is now aflame with the boundless joy of anticipation. Nothing else matters.

We may pardonably wonder why a ship is advanced from the neuter to the feminine gender, but there can be no doubt about the sex of a trout stream. Her beauty, grace and purity would alone place her upon the pinnacle of eternal femininity even if she were not such a coquette. And then to doubly clinch her claims to sisterhood she has an endless flow of most charming conversation. Sweet, indeed, is it to the ear of her devoted lover. And just listen to her gurgling laughter as she rolls, careens and tosses herself over the rocky rifts, kicking her heels in hilarious joy and exposing wee bits of lacy lingerie. Here the sunlight helps her to send a thousand mischievous, flirting winks straight into your eyes. Now in the quiet pool where the bowed limbs of overhanging trees and the lush, topheavy grasses of the shore touch her cheeks with lingering kisses, you hear her voice in the low affectionate murmur of a girl who has found her first love. Her glance is dark, languorous; it is veiled like a thing of enchanting mystery. She invites you to

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cast ever so lightly your lure upon her voluptuous bosom and assures you that if done deftly you will not be sorry. Then as she approaches the cliff over which she must jump to reach her destination she wraps her shapely curves in a gossamer of sheen, and with all the commanding courage of Joan of Arc, plunges into the seething vortex below. Her voice is now imperious, dominant, victorious. Her wonderful eyes, made even more brilliant than before by the spray that has been dashed into them, are now beckoning you on, on, on. But do not follow. Stay right where you are and enjoy her revelries, for she has not gone at all. She is still there, and there she will remain to entrance the soul of man as long as forests are undespoiled.





THE IDEAL STREAM

THERE is no standard by which the perfect trout stream may be judged in all its elements. To this extent, at least, it enjoys the most exalted companionship. Critics of literature, painting and music cannot agree that the lovably majestic "Don Quixote" will outlive the story of human frailty so startlingly depicted in "The Scarlet Letter"; that a Madonna by Raphael is more inspiring than a pastoral by Inness; that the most soul-searching symphony of Wagner will prevail against the simple melody of "Home, Sweet Home." The ideal in these great arts surely exists. So does the ideal trout stream, but its selection must rest upon individual taste.

Many proficient anglers appear to prefer big streams like the Beaverkill, Neversink and Esopus, streams ranging from fifty to one hundred and fifty feet wide. Except for crossing from side to side they are the easiest of all to fish. The banks have been shelved quite clear of trees by spring freshets of great power. Here there is little chance

of the backlash finding trouble. By wading in from either side most, if not all, of the water may be covered. The best streams are not necessarily those at highest altitudes. Many of the Adirondack waters are from fifteen hundred to two thousand feet above sea-level and yet, passing sluggishly through extensive areas of swampy lands, the water is made warm by the sun and soured by decaying vegetation until it becomes very detrimental to the health and growth of trout. This is the chief cause of the uniformly small trout that are taken from such streams; not, as frequently claimed, due to the species. Close to New York City we have just such a stream. The Pequest heads in a dead level swamp of many thousand acres in northern New Jersey. Not until the drainage reaches Townsbury, some miles away, does the water begin to assume the movement of a trout brook. From there to its exit into the Delaware River at Belvidere it has a decline of only a trifle more than two hundred feet in eight miles. During the latter part of the fishing season the warmth of water and the long fronds of vegetation that sway from submerged rocks declare most obtrusively why there are to be found so few of the many fish with which it is annually stocked.

An equally objectionable type of brook is one

THE IDEAL STREAM

formed chiefly by the overflow from a lake. In midsummer the surface of a lake on a sunny, calm day often becomes even too warm for enjoyable swimming. Two feet below, the water may be very cold. It is the warm surface water that flows off. This is as intolerable to the *salvelinus fontinalis*—the fish that “lives in springs”—as a fur neck-piece appears to be on a girl at a Fourth of July picnic. Trout planted in such water may eke out a miserable existence but they cannot thrive. When water reaches a temperature of 68° F. native trout sicken and die. The browns and rainbows, being less refined, may live through a reasonably long period of such depression.

I recall a trip to the East Branch of the Dyberry after a week of very hot June weather. Immersed legs could not hold back the flood of perspiration that soaked through even my coat under the creel strap. The stream was low, clear and swarming with native trout. Several hours of fishing with extreme caution and a long line failed to draw a single rise. Being most uncomfortable from my fruitless efforts in the excessive heat, I removed my sodden clothing with the same feeling of assurance against intrusion as though I were in the privacy of my own chamber at home, for I was completely surrounded

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by several miles of virgin woodland. My gauzy undergarment was washed and hung on a branch over the brook to dry while I sat on a hummock of moss and pondered as I ate my simple lunch. What could be the cause of such complete failure in the presence of thousands of fish? A possible answer was forestalled by a gentle zephyr that wafted my dried union-suit into mid-current, thereby setting the sylvan stage at a most inopportune time for a perfectly engrossing comedy or drama, depending upon the point of view. Nothing can be more elusive to a pair of bare and tender feet than a bit of needed muslin gliding with swan-like speed and grace down the stony bed of a mountain brook. The following day I drove to the State hatchery at Pleasant Mount, where I found that owing to the unusual warmth of water in the pools a wholesale loss of breeders had occurred.

On another occasion, following a long spell of heat, I began my fishing for the day at a deep glide of water, which I had christened the Yellow Sally Pool because a very fine fish had responded many years before to the particularly garish fly of that name, a fly that I rarely use and care little for. So on approaching this water each subsequent time, I offered the same lure, with a singularly uni-

form result. The fly of color most despised in men, dogs and journalism now fluttered to the surface time and again as gently as of yore without bringing any sign of life from beneath. Other flies, including all favorites, were then given their chance. Still no rise. My long exertions in the broiling sun prompted me to wade deeper into the water to cool my blood, as overheated cattle at pasturage often do. I then understood. Leaving the tepid brook, I walked forward and peered over the bank where my lures had tried so hard to please. There I saw a great battalion of big trout huddled together, too enervated by the warm water to be scared even by my presence only a few feet away.

The Dyberry incident reminds me of another that might have been calamitous. A friend and I had spent a day on a strip of the Pocono creek in Monroe County, Pennsylvania, two miles below Tannersville and down the lane from the Alliger brick house. The place is very definitely located here because I wish to add that a prettier piece of water for about one-quarter mile would be difficult to find. As the prearranged time for leaving the stream approached, there were tantalizing challenges offered by one fish after another. I arrived at our car too late to spend time getting off wet togs,

for we were due home that evening and had about one hundred miles to go. Soaked legs and night driving form a mandatory invitation into the hereafter which I was unprepared to accept; therefore it became necessary to make the desired change of clothing en route. With the entire rear portion of the open tonneau at my disposal and a road quite unspoiled by habitations, the act of undressing had been safely and completely finished when far ahead, standing beside the road, I beheld to my horror a woman! Already her hand was raised aloft for a ride into Stroudsburg. Unfortunately, my friend was a most polite and kindly man in the presence of the fair sex. Did he see this woman and understand her signal? He certainly did!

The car began instinctively slowing from its fifty clip down through forty-nine into forty-eight. Heavens! What could the man be thinking of! Crouching low, I leaned forward and with all the power of my lungs shouted through the whizzing wind, "For God's sake, beat it, Jim," and fell a compact lump onto the floor. He promptly stepped on the gas and coldly turned his head the other way, looking at the road ahead with his nigh eye only, in the manner of a chicken inspecting a strange bug. As we zipped past like a bullet I

THE IDEAL STREAM

heard with a sigh of relief her terrifying malediction, "Oh, pshaw!"

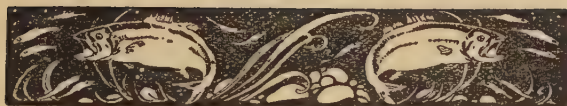
My own ideal trout stream is one ranging from fifteen to thirty feet wide. It flows southerly or southeasterly so that there is the least of sun reflection to bedazzle one's eyes when watching the fly. It has a fall of from fifty to a hundred feet per mile and is made up of many tumbling rivulets fed by springs and from the gradually released moisture of adjacent woodlands. Such brooklets are natural spawning places and perfect nurseries for the young. Owing to the almost uniform temperature of spring water the tiny fish are kept from being frozen into a solid bed of ice during extreme winter weather; the relative warmth of water and the speed of its flow are their safeguards. These rivulets, being at the higher elevations of watersheds, are generally above danger from great freshets. Shielded by forests from the heat of the summer sun, the waters are still very cold as they enter the main stream. The latter is of crystal clearness, unpolluted by acid factories, marshes or barnyards. It ripples over shallows, glides into pools which have been gouged alongside steadfast trees and immovable boulders, and lashes into foam as it falls over rocky precipices. It is mostly arched

YE GODS AND LITTLE FISHES

by cooling shade; only here and there are open meadows to relieve for a time one's faithful vigil over the fate of the backlash.

Such a stream will yield more and larger fish than one double or triple its extreme width. The instinct of trout, both large and small, entices them from the big, warm streams into the cool headwaters. There many of the finest specimens await the troutman from early June to the end of the season. Near the best fishing water there is a comfortable farmhouse where for a very modest sum one may be adopted temporarily into the family. Is not this to you, also, an ideal stream? And it certainly exists. I have spent many of the happiest days of my life there.





FISHING COMPANIONSHIP

A FISHING companion ought to be chosen with the same discrimination as one who is taken "for better, for worse." Your best friend in town might be willing to cripple his own finances to save you from bankruptcy and yet on a trout stream protest against bringing enough wood to make fire for lunch. Friendship and a fishing trip combined often ruin both. If there is the faintest tinge of yellow in a man's character there is nothing, apart from a dog, that will reveal it so quickly as a fishing expedition, especially one fraught with hardship. When once in the country he may with apparent indifference to his own comfort chance to accept for himself the better of the two rooms offered; he may stride thoughtlessly from pool to pool, leaving you to fish behind him day after day; he may to your embarrassment return to headquarters with a creel of fish, most of which ought to have been returned to the stream. In a hundred ways such a man proves himself an unsatisfactory companion, beyond the pale of

sportsmanship. A worthy fisherman is stoical in a way; he endures and makes the best of trials. To him especially are the enchantments of the wilds magnified by a clear conscience.

The most delightful companion of all my experience was discovered many years ago in the Berkshires. After finishing a matter of business which called me up that way, I decided to put in the following day with the bass in Lake Garfield near by. Rod in hand, I was passing the home of a farmer whom I had met the day before. He and his strapping son were "haying it." In response to my shouted salutation, the farmer called back, "Where y' goin'?"

Of course, he saw my rod and knew very well that I was going fishing, also that there was but one place to fish within walking distance at that season. However, I had taken a spontaneous liking to this 235-pounder; so I not only told him where I was going but that I would like him to join me. He said he was very sorry he couldn't; he had a lot of hay down and must get it in. It did look like rain, sure enough; the sky was overcast and a gentle breeze was coming from the pluvial quarter. We leaned against both sides of the snake fence along the roadside, each with a foot upon the low-

est rail in the customary attitude of that period. Quite casually I remarked that I had once seen thirty bass taken in sixty minutes under just such weather conditions.

"Gosh," he said, "I wish I could go with you."

Next I followed with an experience in Maine wherein a salmon, appearing through the translucent water to be an indefinite number of feet or yards in length, had gorged a bass that I was endeavoring to land. I took pains not to omit mention of the similarity of the weather to that which hung vibrant about us. His eyes sparkled with a determination that no tonnage of cut-down grass could daunt. Turning about, as his son passed us on the rattling hayrake, he shouted, "Gar, do you think you can get the hay in alone?"

Garfield understood. "By Christmas, yes," he replied, more or less with a double meaning.

It was unfair and altogether mean for me to have told him those stories, true as they were. My conscience smote sharply as he went to the house to ask his wife to put up lunch for him, my little package being rather small for two. I had smirched my honor but in reward had uncovered a noble spirit which held fishing to be even sweeter than new-mown hay.

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At the village store I bought a big hunk of cheese to add to the festivities. When we reached the lake the sky had cleared, the breeze had died, the surface of the water was glassy, and we soon found that the fish were evidently fasting. We sizzled in the hot sun for hours and did not get a bite until lunchtime arrived and our respective packages had been opened. He disclosed a huge piece of freshly baked ginger cake, the one of all I love best, and a gallant companion for cheese. Perhaps he noticed my look of interest, for he asked, "Do you like coffee cake?" I replied that I ate sparingly of it sometimes, meaning to be literally truthful, for one of the dinky little pieces to which I am accustomed at home would have been only the dwarfed infant of such a robust mother as this chunk.

Please bear in mind, I had lured this farmer away from urgent work; he had been sitting with me upon an adamantine board in the broiling sun for hours; my prognostication of a great catch of bass had gone far afield. He had the best of reasons for feeling sore, outside and in. And yet, he perjured himself like a gentleman in these words:

"Well, sir; I've been married thirty years and you'd think my wife would know by this time how

FISHING COMPANIONSHIP

I hate coffee cake. What in hell she put it in here for I don't know."

He passed it over to me and, with apparent relief and delight, soon saw that I must have been inordinately fond of it. In stowing away the last crumb, I felt that he would be pleased that none had to be cast overboard. He promised to forgive his wife on my account and to express to her my thanks for her error. Long afterwards I learned, purely by chance, that his love for coffee cake was even more insatiable than my own, if possible.





REFINEMENT OF PROCREATION

WE humans prefer to believe that we alone are endowed with virtues of the highest order. How far indeed this is from truth! To riddle the fabric of our vainglorious mental attire we have only to place in juxtaposition our own standards and those of quadrupeds and insects. While endeavoring to think of a single specimen of animal or bird life in which there normally exists no element of merit more pronounced than in ourselves, there comes to mind a dear old lady who could always find something good in everybody. One day the cross-eyed, bow-legged garbage man was lifting an overflowing can of noisome refuse from the street curb when her son asked in an affectionately joking tone if she thought him a handsome man. After slight hesitation she beamed with the joy of having made a kindly discovery and replied, "Ah, my boy, but what a lovely disposition he must have to carry on his work."

To flagellate our haughty spirit let us contemplate the superior loyalty of the dog, the lion's

courage, the lamb's gentleness, the sloth's deliberation, the bee's industry and the cheeriness of the lark. Even the humility of an angleworm is greater than most of us possess. The perseverance of a mosquito is really a virtue. Biology gives us many severe jolts but there is perhaps none so shocking to an ascetic mind as the abyss that lies between the grossness of our methods of reproduction and the highly moral practices of fish. The latter are no less æsthetic than the pollination of flowers. If God had only seen fit to endow mankind with a modification of the same plan how very easy it would be for us to avoid much evil.

With trout there is no amorous desire; in them there are no alert springs of life awaiting the excitement of sexual passion; there is no contact between male and female to be veiled and excused under the guise of love, a word of conspicuous misunderstanding, too often confounded in meaning with affection, respect, reverence. They envelope the phenomena of reproduction with unmatched intelligence, exquisite refinement, admirable dignity and wonderful patience.

Only once annually, beginning at twenty months and usually ending at seven years of age, are the demands of propagation asserted. By Sep-

tember the female shows the burden of enlarging eggs, and the male his milt. When October arrives, with the brooks replenished by equinoctial rains, everything is ready for the event that is to bring from five hundred to two thousand lives into the world. The male, anticipating that he may be the chosen consort of one or more females, is now arrayed in his very finest. Nature at this season has intensified his colors. He has scoured his sides by careening along the sandy bottom; he has cleaned the vermiculated pattern on his back and dorsal fin by rubbing against overhanging bowlders, finally burnishing his entire raiment with the velvety moss that hangs at the water's edge.

From his adopted home he issues forth like a resplendent Beau Brummell, hoping that one of the many potential mothers before whom he is to parade will approve his fitness to perform his share of the duties that lie before them all, and will follow him. In spite of his rich trappings and rotund figure he fails to radiate the least bit of magnetism as he glides from pool to pool on his upstream pilgrimage in quest of a suitable nesting place. Due to a surplusage of males, the females, as in human-kind, seem most difficult to please. However, he realizes that they have a right to be critical. Their

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aim is to make a choice that will yield the surest and best results for their progeny. Eugenics is with them an endowment; an unwritten law. Sentiment on either side is wholly alien to such an important undertaking as the bringing of their kind into life. Morons and other physical weaklings are deprived of the right of parturition by universal edict.

When the female is ready to spawn, the proximity of a male in milt is an imperative necessity precedent to the delivery of her eggs. She must know in advance that they will not remain unfertilized. This instinct is so powerful in its effect that otherwise she may retain the ova until they become glazed and eventually cause her death.

The male pushes his way through rapids, passing pools of steadily diminishing size. Many times he is compelled to fight for his life. Already most of the best claims have been preëmpted and his vicious brothers resent most brutally his attempts at dalliance with their mates. These unstaked claims are located on gravelly shoals near the head or foot of each pool away from the direct force of the current and yet where eddies and ripples are incessantly active. Still onward he goes, encountering opposition from jealous adversaries and

receiving scant sympathy from mated females hovering over their nests. Occasionally two belligerents, fighting for supremacy over one lone female, cease their bitter animosity against each other long enough to join forces in a furious attack upon him as he bolts on toward his uncharted destination nearer the headwaters. The stream is alive with fecundity. He begins to fear that he has little chance of contributing his mite to the cause for which he was born. For him there can be only two more possible occasions; he is now in his fifth year.

Presently he hears the chug of a small brook tumbling into the main stream. Its invitation is pleasantly commanding. He accepts it with a leap that clears the rocky palisade. At once he finds himself within an enchanted realm. The water is clear and cold, which tells him that it comes from near-by springs and will therefore retain the temperature of its source much longer than that of the big stream which, before dread winter comes, may throttle in its icy grip the precious lives entrusted to its mercy. Aërated by numerous falls above, it is filled with vitalizing air. Like wine, it sparkles in the elfin sunshine which steals through protecting hemlocks overhead. The pool is so diminutive in comparison with his great body that he would feel

absurdly out of place if it were not such an ideal nursery for his desired young. Its greatest depth is about a foot. As he swims over the rare bar of gravel at one side he notes with approval that there is not room to submerge his upstanding dorsal fin. He repeatedly places himself at various points near the head of the little pool, relaxing himself and permitting the water to carry him at will, that he may determine the width and power of the current. Next he places himself over the bed of gravel to appraise the water's action there. No human engineer could be more thorough, none so competent for the job in hand.

With nothing else to spur him on except a hope that some discriminating female will, as he has done, leap the brink and accept this faultless home for her progeny, he industriously proceeds to build the sacred nest. Nose and fins are his only implements. With these he pushes and fans gravel and sediment from a central place until a bed concaved like a butter-bowl glistens beneath the dancing wavelets that break ever so gently across its raised circumference.

The luxurious couch is finished but there is still no virgin trout to pave it with her golden pearls. He swims nervously about in the mood of a man

ready to bite his finger nails. "These females are such undependable creatures!" one may imagine him complaining. Intolerably long days and nights of sleepless waiting creep by. There is nothing on earth for him to do but guard the bed and flick from it each bit of vegetable profanation that drifts into it. His appetite has left him entirely, for he does not deign to notice a little band of minnows which sheer aside in alarm with each tour of the pool by his majesty. The skin above his pectoral fins has now a tendency to sag in perpendicular folds, the result of abnegation.

At last on a cloudy night when the inky blackness of his oubliette would have blinded the sight of man, his ever-watchful eyes behold reverently, as an angel from heaven, the sudden appearance of a female trout from over the rocky lip. The manner of his welcome could not be more gracious, more sincere. She seems well content with his apparent virility, which from her he takes as a great compliment, for she is observed to be at the zenith of her powers. A widely distended abdomen indicates that she is carrying not less than two thousand eggs. When in the dead of night she pledges them to his care, the poor, embarrassed fish can show his gratitude in no more practical way than

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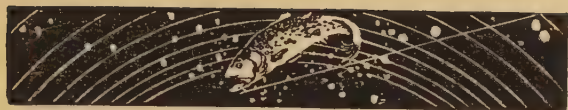
by fanning the immaculate bed free from imaginary impurities, much the same as a friend will flick from the lapel of your coat a nonexistent speck of dust.

Being her first turn in the game of life, she promptly enters the amphitheater. The serious drama of evolution begins. Under natural pressure, eggs averaging a French pea in size are carefully released. Few are deposited at a time, for the equally precipitate milt that is at once ejected must immerse them all completely. Spawning and impregnation are continued until all eggs are deposited and fertilized. The movements of the fish cause the ova to become intermixed gradually with loose gravel. This helps to hold them in their bed when freshets come, and partly hides them from unfriendly vermin during the period of development, which varies according to the temperature of the brook, ranging from fifty days in water at 50° to 125 days at 37° F.

The ceremony is over. There is no bridal bouquet, no wedding march or honeymoon, no lustful pleasure either past or yet to come. The gaunt female goes her way alone to seek out winter quarters. She never says, "Good-by," or even "Au revoir." She respects her erstwhile mate for having

performed his duty properly, but beyond that she does not care a midget if their paths should never cross again. Being not monandrous, she may choose a new mate from season to season and still remain chaste. He, also, is blessed with the same philosophy. Of course, he may never set eyes upon her from this moment. What of it? Their mutual sacrifice has been one of high devotion, untainted by fragile vows that invite discord and faithlessness rather than insure virtue and happiness. If these two trout should chance some time to meet he will look her honestly in the eye and show her the same kindly consideration that he is always ready to bestow upon every female of the species.

Long after she has left their chamber he lingers attentively about the cradle with true parental concern. Only upon assuring himself that no marauder lurks near to undo what has been so patiently accomplished does he perhaps say a silent prayer and trust these priceless lives to the Guardian above. Now, filled with the consolation of a duty well done, he heads for deep water many miles downstream where, after a gorge of minnows picked up by the way, he may snugly hibernate and dream through long winter of the joys that are to come with merry springtime.

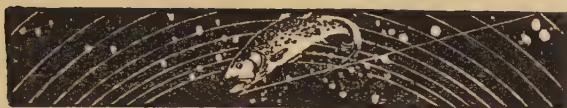


ADVANTAGE OF FISHING FAMILIAR WATERS

TO know a stream is like knowing a friend. Both have imperfections that become apparent through long association and which must be overlooked. Constant thrills of anticipation attend fishing water that is new to one, but, on the other hand, lots of disappointment and time are saved by passing stretches on a familiar stream where one has learned by experience that there are no fish.

Once a friend joined me just for a day on one of my favorite brooks. I felt that it was proper for me to lay aside my rod for the time and devote myself to showing him where trout were to be found. All of five miles of this stream had become so clearly impressed upon my recollection that often on sleepless winter nights a mental tracing of its every bend, rift and pool had soothed me into placid sleep. I had learned, of course, just where the fish were and where they were not. The habitats of trout remain almost the same year after year unless the stream itself becomes altered.

First I guided my friend to a productive pool and with pleasure watched him cock a fly very prettily where the water swirled around a stump. He was an expert fisherman of long experience. The first cast proved irresistible. He laid a fine trout in his creel and resumed fishing just ahead. I told him that he was wasting his time there. He seemed surprised in view of the promising appearance of the water but desisted when I pointed to a big rock against the bank and assured him that a fish was there waiting for him. It was. Then I tried to lead him like a mule past several hundred feet of fine-looking rapids that I knew to contain no fish. He balked with the excuse that he wanted the practice. He might as well have been placing his fly upon the surface of the Dead Sea for all the results it showed. I patiently waited for him to finish and then suggested that he would doubtless find a large trout feeding in the ripples just ahead, which he did. Thereafter he was as docile as a lamb. On returning to town he confided to a mutual friend that I had the fish of that stream mesmerized. He stated that I mentally required a trout to bite and others not to bite and that each command was perfectly obeyed. I knew the stream—that was all.



SUNDAY OBSERVANCE

THE very questionable distinction of prohibiting Sunday fishing belongs to Pennsylvania. Even blue-lawed Connecticut evidently considers this recreation no more contaminating to public morals than golf, baseball, tennis, or disporting at the seashore. Doubtless the successive administrations of the Keystone State believe there must be something particularly devilish in quietly and, by many, reverently following the banks of a sylvan brook, else they would not have kept alive so long this strangely discriminative law. Besides depriving of this pleasure those who have no other day to call their own, the statute is open to question as an economic policy. It has induced many thousands of their own citizens to buy summer homes where a welcome is extended to anglers every day in the week. It also measurably restricts license receipts from both residents and non-residents.

For me such a law causes no deprivation. Usually a stream is mine to enjoy for weeks at a time. I prefer to devote a day now and then to resting

and it might as well be Sunday whether in Pennsylvania or elsewhere. One of the exceptions to this practice occurred in Massachusetts. Quickly following it came retribution, not to me but to a friend who, against the dictates of conscience, was led from the thorny path of rectitude which he, being a deacon, had no business leaving.

The day was one that might more truthfully be designated as Sabbath than Sunday. Sullen clouds covered the sky. The house was too cold and cheerless to permit of reading in comfort. Outside, the hens, instead of placing their customary contributions in the straw collection boxes of their sanctuary and then glorifying themselves by singing their strident hymns, withheld their nuggets and stood disconsolately about, each on one leg, in the lee of the barn. The cattle refused to chew their cuds, such was their discontent. Grunts from the pigsty were alone in harmony with such a forbidding day. Enough of such desolate nothingness for me.

To my companion I suggested that we do a little fly casting on the big pool below the mill. When he declined I respected him as one might venerate a martyr to a sacred idea. Our host hitched a rebellious work-horse to a rickety wagon and I climbed in. The temptation of the stream then overcame

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my friend's scruples. Inasmuch as I intended only to practice casting, and promised not to fish, he came along.

The trout may have been in league with the very devil himself, for they seized his fly as soon as it touched the water. I believe he honestly tried to snatch it away but they insisted upon coming with it until he possibly thought a conspiracy was on foot. Gradually his devotional spirit of withdrawal was seen to merge into combative desire as he carefully timed the strike. His dormant fighting blood came to life and he was aflame with excitement. Never before in all his experience had trout rushed so madly for his fly. A cold, drizzling rain that had set in was powerless to dampen his ardor. Hours fled by. Lunchless noontime came and went. Still the fish offered him constant battle. Not until late in the afternoon was I able to induce him, blue with chill and soaked to the skin, to leave the rest of the trout for another day. I especially regret that my friend lost the hearing in one ear because of exposure on that Sabbath day, for I have felt myself much to blame for his misfortune. The only moral to be drawn from this recital about Sunday fishing is to do what your conscience dictates—and do it.



FOOTPRINTS OF THAT DEMON, RUM

WE had landed at the junction of the Ulster & Delaware and the Delaware & Northern railroads;—a place called Arkville. How appropriate the name! Arkville! Perhaps Noah touched that high spot at the time of the great flood and left as a souvenir the solitary bottle of rye back of the fly-specked looking-glass which added so much to the hominess of the little bar we found there. However that may be, we stood on the spot termed “the station” waiting for the train that was to take us to Andes on the Tremperkill. The station had neither sides nor roof nor any floor other than the sodden earth upon which the chilling, dense mist dripped from our clothing.

There were four of us, each dreadfully afraid of pneumonia. Over a door across the way we fortunately discovered the now almost forgotten emblem of hospitality. In those days Carrie Nation was in swaddling clothes, for all we had ever heard of her. One could then act, as in a charade, the motto, “Down with drink,” for a dime almost

anywhere. It happened to be my good fortune to be the first to ask the keeper if he had anything real fine. For one to enter a grocery or a dressmaking establishment, or even a morgue, and make the same inquiry would have been accepted in any court as evidence of an unsound mind, but to this social economist it meant a very definite thing. Rubbing the dust of ages from its neck and shoulders, he placed before us a bit of liquid antiquity such as is only equaled in promise by the aged appearance of containers under our present methods of simulation.

Need I emphasize that we were most temperate? Did we remain at the bar and have another? We did not. He received his forty cents and we hurriedly filed out to be ready for our overdue train. The rain did not now seem quite so cold, but after some moments of watchful waiting it grew very chilly and we again caused the precious bottle to contribute of its medicinal properties. The price this time was fifty cents. The law of supply and demand was evidently known in Arkville. Once more we stood in the comfortable drizzle until it apparently became too cold to freeze, and a third time we consorted with the lifesaver—now sixty cents. The arrival of the longed-for train prevented

us from ever learning the height to which spiritual values may ascend. If any one man is responsible for the present ruinous prices it is more likely than not to be the keeper of the bottle of Arkville.

To apply the word "train" to that which we boarded may convey a wrong meaning. True, there was an engine, a freight car and a passenger coach. The proportions seemed right enough but it all had a shrunken look as though soaked in alum water. The passenger car was a withered little shrimp of a thing that whined and groaned as its aged joints were strained to their utmost by the sinuous, binding path that led over the undulating thank-you-ma'ams. These had been installed, it was alleged, to prevent speeding. Perhaps the car was a cast-off from the Erie during its period of renovation following the fruitful opportunities of Drew, Fiske and Gould, though it seemed to bear a somewhat louder but otherwise more faithful resemblance to the first car that ran over the old Camden & Amboy railroad. However, it had one diverting convenience that appears to have been entirely lost sight of in modern construction, a feature that makes a trip seem much shorter than it really is. There was a big cylindrical stove at one end; its cloven feet rested in a spacious bed of sand held in

place by two by fours. It was really quite remarkable how close the lumberjacks at the other end of the car came to hitting this miniature Desert of Sahara.

On the way up to Andes I made note of what appeared to be an especially fine bit of stream; it was near a white house and a yellow barn. A few days later I took the train with the idea of getting off at the next station below it. Being the only passenger, the conductor took the vacant place beside me and became very friendly. He did his best to entertain me by pointing out various gouges in the steep embankment where the disgruntled train had jumped the track on many recent occasions and had plowed its way to freedom, but I adroitly changed the subject. To discuss such a matter from the safety of a rocking-chair out on a lawn under the shade of a tree seemed a much more suitable place. I then asked him about the fishing where the brook had impressed me so favorably from the car window. He replied that there was no more likely spot in the Tremperkill and asked if I would like to get off there. It was several miles from any station. My thanks were most sincere as he stopped the train for me. Thereafter, stations meant nothing at all on the great Delaware & Northern R. R.

YE GODS AND LITTLE FISHES

With mingled regret and guilt, I read some time later that receivers had been appointed for this most considerate of all railroads.

Always a temperate user of spirits, I one day became a teetotaler under most exasperating circumstances. The time of this episode was either before or after the coming of prohibition. It would be inappropriate here to expose the immoralities and worse that are charged to the demon, rum. There are thrilling tracts and mountains of statistics available elsewhere for those in doubt. I merely wish, for the benefit of those who wade cold mountain brooks, to confess in as reserved a manner as possible that I have found nothing so effective as a real old-fashioned drink of whisky to chase away chills that have been gathering for a jump into pneumonia.

The morning of the day of my enforced conversion was unseasonably cold. My flask, after having been permitted to remain at half mast for several days, was now filled to overflowing against all forms of colds, boils, diabetes, lumbago and every other ailment that might arise from impeded circulation. Though rye has been my favorite household remedy, whenever my wife happens to be looking on I always make up that sort of a face,

fearing otherwise that she might think I like it. My companion on this trip was an equally firm believer in the expeditiousness of Jersey lightning.

We had only fairly started on the stream and were barely out of sight of each other, both fishing on what was locally known as "the abandoned farm," when I saw a villainous-looking man on horseback driving a herd of cattle down the road near by. He turned them in at the first bar-way and I then realized that he was probably the new man in the neighborhood, known as a tough customer. He quickly disappeared in the direction where I knew my friend to be. Presently he came back up the road looking toward the stream and, spying me, threw the bridle rein over the head of his mount, jumped the fence and strode directly toward me.

Of course, I was trespassing, the penalty for which must be a day of sport lost and an arbitrary fine of ten dollars. The rough-looking fellow stopped short at the edge of a bank that had been undercut by the current, while I stood in the water near the other side apparently unconscious of his presence, leaving him to believe that the murmur of the stream had impaired my vision, or anything else he might prefer to think. His steady gaze I felt

so keenly that my casting became extremely grotesque. My fear of what he might do was mixed with shame at such a woeful exhibition. Finally, in a voice as resonant as a bull's, he asked, "What luck, bo?"

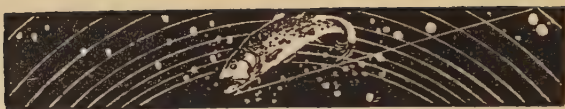
Instantly the tension snapped. With great relief I looked up and replied, "Not much." There was nothing reassuring about his ugly face, shaded by a wide-spreading sombrero, and the long-barreled revolver which hung in its holster at his hip left me no reason to question his orders, whatever they might be.

"Mebbe you ain't got the right sort o' bait," he volunteered with what I took to be an ingratiating grin. Congratulating myself that a drink was probably all he was after, but with a suspicion that he might not play fair, I passed my flask over the water to him, stepping only just near enough so that he had to reach far out over a deep swirl. It was my thought that if he really wanted me he could be dropped head first into the cold brook by a very slight pull, seemingly accidental. However, he proved to be sincere and appreciative as well. My precious whisky gurgled down his yawning throat even unto the last drop. Tossing the empty flask back, he swung into an unsteady gait that struck

me as being somewhat premature. He mounted his horse with a "Hi! Yip!" and up the dusty road he flew shooting holes through the air, such was his boundless exaltation.

Later in the day my friend, with blue lips and chattering teeth, told me how a stranger wearing a sombrero had drained his full half pint of apple brandy.





WEATHER

AN old adage declares that when the wind is in the south, bait is blown into the fish's mouth. Evidently the writer of the oft-repeated jingle containing this advice must have had open-water fishing in mind. It should in no degree be considered by stream fishermen. To them a windy day, let the wind come from whatever direction it may, is the most annoying of all weather conditions. Glaring hot sun, a shower, and a lazy fall of snow, if all could be combined intermittently in a single day, would be less unfitting for effective manipulation of the fly, for

With wind from in front
You cast with a grunt;
With wind from the rear
The fly stabs your ear;
With wind from the right . .
A limb is caught tight;
Wind coming from port
Means death to the sport.

While restless breezes blow, the ever shy trout, suspicious of waving branches, changing shadows and falling leaves, seeks the protection of a friendly

boulder or overhanging bank. He declines to be tempted by a palpably false fly slapped onto the water in a most unnatural way. But even a single day of a fishing expedition is too valuable to be lost; it must be utilized regardless of wind. This may be accomplished in bold defiance of the most annoying of all the elements. There is a place on nearly every brook where the wind may howl high up in the tree-tops without rippling the surface of the water below. Yes, there are dozens of them on the average winding woodland stream. Here, then, are to be the scenes of your devotion and success during the wild rampages of Æolus.

A lowery day is without doubt the most favorable for lake fishing; the fearsome boat is less visible to the fish against an overcast than against a bright blue sky. On the contrary, such a day is not so desirable for brook trout fishing. When the sun shines it induces trout, like people, to come out from their loafing places to enjoy it. Only a lengthened cast is necessary to offset the brilliant light.

With a boon companion I had enjoyed a delightful week on a stream of rare charm and productiveness. Each day seemed even more beautiful than the one before. He was, regretfully, about to return to the city, while I had engaged a convey-

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ance to take me a few miles farther upstream. We were to leave our stopping place at 5 P. M. As we quit the brook together early that afternoon I endeavored in various ways to cheer him out of his dumps. Looking critically at the heavenly blue, unsullied by the faintest cloud from horizon to horizon, I remarked, "You are a lucky dog to be going home to-day. We are going to have one corker of a storm now that you are through."

He knew, as I did, that there was no feel whatever in the air, no evidence in the sky, to indicate a change in the weather but nevertheless he played up to this asinine prognostication by asking, "Just when is this big storm of yours going to be pulled off?"

Again gazing aloft and to all points of the compass, I declared finally and definitely after consulting my watch that the tempest would arrive at quarter past five.

"To-day?"

"Yes, to-day."

It may seem strange to the city-wedded person that two grown men could so far forget the important things of life as to descend to such idle conversation—the visionary speculations of children—and yet these reversions to youthful ways are of the

divine mysticism of the forest and the stream. During the next hour or so we busied ourselves packing our kits. I dare say he did not give a thought to a great, dense cloud that came hurrying toward us from the south as we parted on schedule time bound in opposite directions. I assuredly did not, but in another fifteen minutes my freak prediction fell upon me with a vengeance. It was a real he-storm. The mighty gale uprooted trees; hail-stones riddled fields of corn; lightning struck barns with fiendish accuracy; deafening thunder seemed to well up from the bowels of the earth. Progress being impossible, the driver turned about and there we waited for the monstrous thing to pass, fearing momentarily that we might be snuffed out of existence.

On the following day I received from my friend a telegram, as follows: "The Government wants you at once to run the weather bureau." He has asked me many times since to forecast the weather for him, but I have permitted my laurels to remain untarnished by never having ventured another prediction.



POSTING AGAINST TRESPASS

NOTHING can be more trying to the temper of a fisherman than to find at the end of a long trip that the stream of his destination has been posted from head to tail. This experience has left more blights upon my otherwise happy life than there are warts on a winter squash.

Generally these notices are mute invitations to come up to the house, sometimes a mile or more distant, and either pay a fee for permission to fish or agree to return with half the catch. Once, however, after a run of about two hundred miles to a stream, I found it posted and the owners of ten miles of it unanimously determined to keep everybody off. It appeared that foreigners from a near-by town, not being eligible for licenses because of their non-citizenship, had visited the stream repeatedly, dynamited pools and left broken fences in their wake. Upon applying for legal relief, the farmers had been told to post their lands.

Thus it came about that I found them all standing firmly upon their declared rights. My position became doubly pathetic when, upon looking at the stream from public bridges, I saw that it was

a beauty beyond compare with any other of my knowledge. Was there no solution for this troublesome problem? I must find some way of meeting these men casually. To call upon them at their homes would be fatal to success, for those who live in the back country have lots of time to become suspicious of strangers. I learned that midway with the length of the stream there was located the creamery for that whole region. Across from it was a storekeeper; so with him I arranged for bed and board. Though I never smoke cigars, I had put a box into my kit, also some whisky. With a liberal supply of both stowed in pockets of my fishing coat I sauntered over to the creamery next morning when the line of farmers with their milk began to form. With each of them I talked in turn, starting with the weather and deftly swinging to the milk situation. Both are safe topics and the latter is especially welcome providing one marvels at the low price paid the producer for what is often 5 per cent fluid, compared with the high price we in town have to pay for it after it has been skimmed down to 3 per cent, leaving just enough butter-fat to pass the legal requirement. It is easy to wax quite oratorical over such an unfair state of things.

Meanwhile my garb was quietly telling its own story of why I was there. If a driver looked like a smoker I gave him a cigar. They all proved to be smokers or had friends who smoked. Those who appeared thoroughly saturated with vice also got a drink right from my personal flask as an avowal of friendship. These men found that the cigars were good and the drink good. By the third morning most of the teams came alongside the milk platform where I stood, with two men to a seat. Within the week the whole ten miles of fishing was opened to me. All? No; all but one stretch of half a mile of the finest water, which was owned by the hardest-boiled crab I have ever met.

Year after year when fishing this stream I always quit at his lower line fence, walked up to his house, lowered the bucket into the well with enough racket to bring him from the house or barn, satisfied an imaginary thirst, discussed the weather and milk situation, handed him my flask and a cigar, went on my way up the road and re-entered the stream above his upper fence while he looked on and pondered. The fifth year, when I was leaving him after performing this rite, he called me back and petulantly inquired why I had never asked for the privilege of fishing through

his farm. At last! I had worn him down as the most stubborn trout may be brought to net by the finest leader. I replied carelessly that I had no time to waste on poor water; that I was to be there only a short time, etc. He then declared with considerable heat, which he belched forth in a choice assortment of oaths, that he owned the finest strip of water in the entire valley. Again I manifested such a calm indifference that he almost pleaded with me to return to his lower line and fish through. Under protest I acceded to his wishes, first making him understand that I did it as a favor to him.

Is patient endeavor worth while? It surely was in this case. The stream here pushed its way through dense timber. Big trees had declined to budge for the powerful spring freshets and great holes had been bored into the earth beneath their towering trunks, leaving a compact series of deep pools framed by roots and boulders. These pools were teeming with trout. No one had been allowed to fish them for years, not even the village boys who usually do as they please. It was for the sole enjoyment of a scoffer that they had been ripening.

An incident which soon occurred may be worth recounting for its lesson. Having decided upon the best spot from which to cover one of these pools,

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I was forced to climb over a partly submerged log to reach it. The water where I stood to cast was nearly up to my hips. Presently a nice fish arose and in due time was led into the net, which on this occasion was of the type that is suspended from the shoulder by web-covered elastic. The fact that a fish worth saving should never be transferred from net to creel except when safely away from the water, the presence of a most inviting eddy that had not yet been covered, and the difficulty of getting out of the stream without wading close to this eddy, all formed an interesting plot against me. Not having decided what plan had best be followed if I were to hook another good-sized fish, I had no sooner placed an Alder at the margin of the circling foam than it was snapped by the twin of the beauty that hung swishing in the water at my side. Now it was too late for deliberation. There was nothing else to do but lower the net just enough to get it under the twin as he floated toward me on his side. And so it happened that I clambered onto the bank with two trout in my landing net, each more than a foot long.



THE TALE OF A WHALE

THE largest trout I ever saw, barring the one that had been so enormously magnified by my youthful excitement, was in the Lackawaxen a number of years ago. He may be there yet for all I know. The story begins with my companion coming in late for dinner one afternoon without deigning to offer excuse or apology. He seemed preoccupied and declined to enter into the general conversation. Evidently something had gone seriously wrong. All attempts to draw him out proved futile and were abandoned.

The sky, wearing all her brilliant jewels, and the soothing balm of the evening air invited me to a comfortable chair on the porch where, with the aid of a pipe, I set to work trying to solve the uncomfortable mystery which in a day had transformed one of the finest fellows on earth into an unsociable sphinx. Sherlock Holmes would naturally have peered into his creel, where he would have seen only half a dozen trout of moderate size; he would have recalled that the fish had been rising unusually well that day; he would have re-

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marked that my friend had suffered no bodily accident and that he ate ravenously. Therefore, of course, much of his time had been spent in an effort to capture an extraordinary fish, and his failure to do it would account for a mood bordering upon suicide or murder.

After a while my friend came out of the house and, nervously pacing back and forth, allowed his secret to burst from him like a bomb. It was what any one of sound reasoning would have known all the time.

In a tone that appeared to carry a tinge of malevolence, he said, "To-day I saw the biggest trout that has ever lived."

At last the spell was broken. I hurriedly sought to relieve him of his burden by asking a lot of questions, ending with:

"And where, old man, did you see him?"

His reply was a withering smile flashed in the moonlight. Then he continued, "His mouth is like a cave, by cricky! He's a whale, I tell you, and I ought to know! I had him on!"

"You had him on?" I repeated. "How did he get away?"

He started to explain but stopped abruptly and went off to bed. Next morning he asked with a

THE TALE OF A WHALE

fervent interest, which he could not disguise, where I intended fishing that day. I replied that if it would not interfere with his plans I would begin right in front of the house and perhaps work up into the Giles lot. A nerve perceptibly twitched his face. I was on the right track! I refrained from inquiring about his destination, for, having now become somewhat familiar with this Holmes business, I divined through my occult power of deduction that he would not lose a minute until he had reached the home of his whale.

The stream was about twenty-five feet wide in the shallows and half that in the deeps. The wonder trout might as well as not be far beyond the limit of my trip for the day. Yet the thought that he might be in the very pool where I was fishing recurred at so many pools without avail that I eventually dismissed him from mind and became duly absorbed in the battles offered by fish of ordinary size. The possible presence of the whale became soon only a legend in my memory. Furthermore, I began to distrust my ability as a detective.

On reaching the Giles pasture I found the stream much changed from the previous year. Ahead of me a giant elm had been dethroned by

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a mad freshet. Such of its roots as rested within the bed had helped to build a driftwood dam through which the water boiled from beneath. Between two widespreading roots, reaching high into the air, my fly fluttered to the glassy surface of the pent-up water. The merest tip of a nose punctured the sun-reflected mirror and the fly was sucked down. Such deliberation, not even a noticeable swell upon the sheen, indicated a big fish. The strike was very light but none the less momentous and prophetic. The feel was as though a watersoaked log had been gaffed. Could it be my friend's whale? Hastening around the driftwood toward the head of the pool, thoughts flitted through my brain as rapidly as in the sprightliest of nightmares. There before me yawned one of the many problems that are constantly in the making to humble proud fishermen. This one must have been conceived in Hell, for the Lord, I know, is too merciful to have ever dreamed of such a thing.

Here staring me right in the face was certainly the largest trout I have ever seen alive or mounted. I am compelled to omit a statement either of his weight or length, for neither do I know. He deployed with confidence in an easy, graceful curve, for we had a potential battle on. Perhaps he did

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this to frighten me. He showed no fear of me whatever. My dismay might have been less pronounced under fair conditions, but he had me beaten at the start. The labyrinth of logs and gnarled roots was a veritable fortress for this king of the stream. There in absolute security he might continue to enjoy peace and plenty for all the harm my little fly could do. As he swung around in his survey and challenge, I asked him this audible and pertinent question and, I am sorry to say, in these very words, "How do you expect me to take you from this hellish hole?"

Of course, he could not have actually heard the inquiry, for, as we know, fish cannot hear sounds outside the water. Still, he appeared to understand. With a glance of utter contempt he sailed majestically into his throne room, casually stopping on the way to break the frail leader across a root. As a fresh leader and fly were being attached for the next pool ahead a song was heard by the browsing cattle close by. It had to do with packing up troubles and smiling.

As the afternoon was drawing toward its close I sat on a mossy bank to repack my catch in fresh ferns. They were lying in state beside me when down the stream came the very boy about whom so

much has been written—the bare-legged, freckle-faced youth with the bent-pin hook and the big string of fish. This was the boy sure enough, but something was wrong with the picture. Ah, yes. By adopting a real hook instead of his bent pin he was badly handicapped, though, at that, he had succeeded in capturing three nice little five-inch trout which he proudly carried on a crotched birch stick. The law does not seek to curb such joys of childhood, nor should it. If one never began life fishing downstream with bait and keeping undersized fish he would not be able, when the awakening time came later on, to participate in the satisfaction of reformation. This happy youngster caught a glimpse of the array on the bank, the smallest of which would have outweighed all of his, and after an irrepressible “Oh! Boy!” permitted his enthusiasm to run riot.

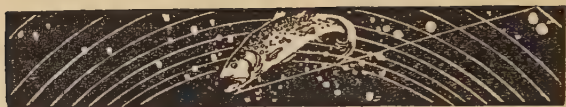
As soon as he had become reasonably calm he was regaled with my experience with the whale. In the interest of youth and against ethics a plan was thereupon outlined which, if carried out, could not fail to make this particular bare-legged, freckle-faced boy fill the great gap that really exists between fancied and real performance. He was instructed to tie to a line strong enough to hold a

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wild heifer a sturdy pickerel hook, piercing a gob of night-walkers with all ends dangling to work up interest, to crawl upon his tummy close to the head of the designated pool in the Giles lot and to toss in his baited hook; then to let out sufficient line for the current to swing his lure about just above the roots. The final and most important injunction was this:

"When you feel him at work give him more line and plenty of time for you to say your evening prayer, 'Now I lay me.' Say it right through and say it slowly. He will need all of that time to mouth the hook into position and to swallow it. Next, carefully draw the line towards you. If you find that it comes up against something give it a quick yank, put it over your shoulder and walk upstream with him." Whether he followed this Machiavellian advice or not, I never heard. How I wish I had been that boy!





IN THE NOVA SCOTIA WOODS

THE color of a trout is influenced greatly by the element in which it lives. Once, while I was staying at a fishing village on the Nova Scotia coast, a party of half a dozen was made up to visit a distant lake for trout. On the way, I asked the driver if our trip was to take us near any stream-fishing. Before reaching the lake he put me on a course through a dense forest where he said I would find a trout brook. Incidentally he remarked that the largest bear ever seen in the Province had been killed in these woods the week before. Being unarmed, I preferred to accept his statement as a somber joke. I found the stream to be of very dark amber color, indicative of swamp drainage. For some time my fly met with no response; then it took hold of a small fish, jet black except for its white belly. My first thought was that it must be a bullhead, coming from such water, although I had never known of one of that species rising to a fly. As I drew it nearer, I saw that it was a native trout. It was interesting to note that soon after coming into contact with the

air it took on a much lighter tone, light enough so that the vermiculated pattern on the back and the side spots became quite distinct. Others were caught, all small and black, as I waded up the ten-foot stream that flowed through the heart of a virgin wilderness.

The intermittent puffs from my pipe were fanned gently to the rear by zephyrs so light that the leaves on the trees made no responsive sound. My deliberate steps in the gravelly bed were muffled by the water. The silence was most impressive. A partridge sitting on a near-by limb lent a calm friendliness to the quiet scene. Then, without warning, all was changed! My blood was chilled with fright! Directly before me, with the suddenness of an explosion, were mighty thuds upon the earth and a tearing of branches as though the forest was being rent asunder. Immediately, to my great relief, the sounds receded and my courage returned. Stepping very cautiously forward, I discovered the tracks and swath of a badly frightened moose that had come to the brook for a drink.

The main party had met with success on the lake and I found them at the cabin where we were to spend the night. It was a one-room shanty with a roofed porch about three feet deep. Here we ate

our supper, carelessly dropping fish bones on the ground a foot below. Inside the hut there proved to be just enough blankets for one apiece. There was also a hammock. Sleeping on the floor of this stuffy joint even with boughs to soften it did not compare with the luxury of a hammock; so we all tossed for the prize. It was handed to me as the winner and I proceeded to suspend it between two of the posts that held the roof of the dwarfed porch. The night promised to be cold, but the fetid air within was unendurable. In trying to adjust my blanket I found no way to cover all exposed portions, so ended by protecting the lower half of my body and my legs, under and over, leaving all above the belt open to the weather. The air was wonderfully sweet with the fragrance of balsam and pine. I rejoiced, as I counted the twinkling stars while being wafted into unconsciousness. How long I slept I do not know, but during the night, while the moon was still high, I was awakened either by chills or by the crunching of fish bones beneath me. I moved my head to see what was going on a foot below and an animal about the size of an Airedale slunk away and quickly disappeared in the gloom. At that time I thought that the creature was as big as a Newfoundland, but it may

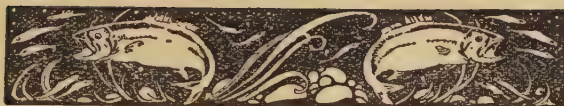
have been no larger than a Yorkshire terrier, so a compromise on the Airedale seems reasonable.

A powerful ague, not wholly due to the low temperature, gripped my vertebral column and I concluded it would be best not to remain longer in the night air. My doctor, I knew, would have so ordered. Inside the hut I snuggled upon the floor close between two sleepers to get warmed, drawing my blanket close to my face for the first time. It was noisome with the most penetrating combination of awful smells imaginable. An elixir of asafetida and rancid hair oil steamed over burning feathers might have been fragrant by comparison. I shoved it away and tried to get to sleep.

The abruptness of my entrance into the cabin had stopped the nasal vibrations of its occupants momentarily but they soon began making up for lost time. Riding in sleepers has taught me to become accustomed to the low-pitched rhythmic guttural of polite society. It has ceased to disturb me. This was quite properly done by four of the pale-faces as they lay close together in a row. The fifth evolved such a weird medley that for me to attempt to sleep under its influence was not to be considered. It started at the proper key but instead of holding firmly to that burred tone in the lower

register until the worst was over and then pushing out the balance in a single puff, this proficient artist transformed it into a rising wail that ended in a whistle. It was less than a foot from my ear, so I began experimenting with it. Why not use my quilt as an anæsthetic? The first trial proved effective. Carefully raising its hem, I held it within a few inches of the eruptive orifice. That proved to be close enough. The raucous sleeper stopped his delirious sonata midway of a bar and wheezed, "Pschoo!" I pretended to be asleep and started to beat him to it, but he quickly overtook and passed me. The aromatic blanket was again pressed into service. Finally he turned over, causing the return of his gymnastic glottis to normal, and, with a grateful feeling, I promptly dropped into a deep sleep. The same blanket, I am informed, is still doing its powerful best to soothe tired fishermen who chance to spend the night in that hut in the Nova Scotia forest.





ALL A PART OF THE GAME

SOLELY to investigate Tenmile River in Sullivan County, I left New York one morning prepared to spend a day or so trying it out with a view to a later visit if it should prove worth while. The topographic map promised little encouragement, for it indicated that this stream is made up mostly from the overflow of two marshy ponds, Luxton and Swamp. It did, however, show a satisfactory fall per mile through a very sparsely settled region, which tempted my curiosity.

My kit contained its usual hundred pounds or more when dropped off the Erie train at a stop which the conductor called Tusten. Here the Tenmile enters the Delaware River. The train pulled out quickly as though anxious to get away from such a lonely place, affording me an unobstructed view of the village, which I found to consist of the railroad station and a lone farmhouse. The former was a box-car shorn of its trucks and wheels, resting upon a bed of cinders. The farmhouse was too far away for me to think of lugging my kit to it. Here then, I contemplated, was the very spot where

in the early days of our country the brave Colonel Tusten and his little army were surrounded and cruelly massacred by the Indians. It was indeed a wild place in the center of a mountain woods. A hawk on the dead limb of a near-by tree showed no fear; a bold snake tried to fascinate me until a badly thrown rock caused it to glide away into rank weeds. Indians! I could imagine them still lurking about in the surrounding forests.

While these disturbing impressions mingled with speculation about where I was to stay overnight, I saw a man approach from the other end of the cinder path bordering the tracks. He walked deliberately but with the litheness of a tiger and stopped ten feet distant as though about to spring upon his prey. A sinister expression on his lean face was intensified by the loss of one eye. The other eye he riveted upon me as a vulture looks down upon a sure victim. In a voice that appeared to travel all the way from his diaphragm, he asked, menacingly, "Do you belong to the lumber company?" I replied that I belonged to no lumber company; that I had come to fish the Tenmile and would like to know where I could put up. His eager look abated somewhat but he once more inquired, "Sure you don't belong to the lumber company?" As much as he

hated to do it, he became convinced that I was only a guileless fisherman. Then he mumbled grudgingly that I might find a place to sleep at a boarding-house kept for lumberjacks about a mile down the river. Two dollars persuaded the owner of the house near the station to leave his job of flattening the end of his spine long enough to take me to my destination.

Just such exploratory trips as this have led me into many tortuous and unpleasant channels but my experience at Tusten left the deepest impression of all, the torture was so slow and perfectly rounded out.

The home of the lumberjacks faced the Delaware and, like a balky horse, it had backed away from the high bank as close as it could get to a precipice in the rear. Water dripped from countless seams in these palisades, making slimy pools where mosquitoes were being made by the millions. The air was alive with these ravenous insects. They drilled through everything I wore except my shoes. In the evening, as I sat outside with the boss, listening to the splashing muskrats making their vesper round-up of fish in the river, and being tormented by mosquitoes to the limit of endurance, I felt that all this might have been obviated if

I had admitted to Dick One-eye that I did "belong to the lumber company." It was then that I learned his mission. The information served to give me a strangely close sympathy for the ill-fated Col. Tusten. It seemed that a lumber concern had cleaned out the best of a big block of virgin timber, shipped it to the city and had vamoosed without paying the men. So they had delegated this efficient member of their band to watch all trains from New York and to sink to the bottom of the Delaware any representative of the Company who appeared without their pay.

Between the shivers which ran up and down my back at the contemplation of my narrow escape, and the intolerable mosquitoes, I was most unhappy. Presently I decided to forget my troubles by going to bed. Never have I received a more joyous welcome anywhere. Upon entering my room in the twilight I was greeted by thousands of these pests. They were a merry, industrious crew, singing when not working and working when not singing. The air was so full of them that countless collisions soon covered the duotone bedspread with the maimed and dying. Hastily undressing and jumping in between the neutral tinted sheets, I there felt confident of outwitting these brainless

things. When they found themselves cheated of access to the meaty portions of my body they swarmed like a hive of angry bees onto my face and into my eyes. There still remained to be played in this game a card that I thought was to be my unbeatable trump but which proved ineffective against their joker. I wound the much used sheet about my head, leaving only the tip of my nose exposed. With rage they jumped upon the pinnacle like an opposing team falls upon the player with the football. They virtually ripped my proboscis into ribbons. As each army mounted the ramparts and appeared by their weight to be several tiers deep I swept a handful of the smelly sheet about them and crushed them into gory pulp with fiendish satisfaction. This wholesale slaughter continued far into the night, until exhausted nature finally gave up in despair. Next morning the nose which I was destined to wear during the rest of my life looked, in the wavy, fly-specked mirror, like a rum-soaked bunch of fungus. Such were the minute table decorations that my breakfast appetite, which is generally the most enjoyable of all my possessions, was fully satisfied with an egg eaten out of hand without even the aid of a spoon. All this was quite in keeping with my later investiga-

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tion of Tenmile River. The map proved to be correct. I was not surprised to find the water saffron colored, entirely unfit for trout, but admirably suited to the perch that took my fly and forced me to turn from it forever.





ON FINDING STOPPING PLACES

ESTABLISHED boarding-houses and village hotels in trouting regions are always ready to welcome the angler. The food is usually plain but wholesome; the conveniences often include electric lights and bath. Notwithstanding these comforts, a stream worth cultivating as a friend is entitled to a more personal intimacy than is possible in the limelight of the populace. Her more delectable portions are modestly hidden from ease of access, and there the best fishing awaits. I have always tried to avoid the more frequented haunts, preferring to insert myself into the home life of some back country farmstead. At times this has been difficult. Through generations of aloofness the isolation of an ideal location surrounds such a home with the sentimental battlements of the anchoret. Strangers are not usually welcome, but a welcome may be cultivated.

Once I stopped perforce at the home of an itinerant butcher. It was the only house that would open its doors to me and to my companion, and then only after most persuasive arguments. The

wife did us the conspicuous honor of laying narrow strips of carpet for us to walk upon, from the outer door direct into our respective rooms. This homage had been paid by Sir Walter Raleigh to his Queen, but he is said to have made a poor job of it. For our first meal we had fried ham, the one food which I hope will be the entrée of my last earthly feast. It was cob-cured, tender and sweet. Perhaps I smacked my lips over it; I hope not, for the peace of Emily Post and other law-givers of table manners. My friend did not touch it, which meant to me that he was not feeling well. The next meal we had ham; also the next and the next and the next for the week that we stayed there. Until I remarked to him one day about the excellence of the ham, I never knew that he had spent all his younger life on a farm and had there eaten the last bit of pork he ever intended to eat.

During this period, when fishing up the stream a mile or so, I observed a pleasant-looking farmhouse close by and decided then to pave the way for a future home. Each day I contrived to leave with the farmer a mess of fish after talking weather, crops and milk with him. On my last day I announced that I had become enamored with the

charms of that particular part of the stream that flowed through his meadow and that I would like to spend a week or so at his place the following year. Like a scared hermit crab, he at once drew into his shell. "The womern" would not care to have any stranger there, he guessed. I assured him that I would make myself one of the family; that I would retire when they went to bed, get up when they did, eat whatever they happened to have on hand, and would step aside whenever I saw one of them coming my way. He smoothed a dirt-clod with his foot contemplatively, which indicated that the seed had been sown in fertile soil and covered. It germinated after I left and lay dormant like winter wheat throughout the rigors of the following cold months, when there is little to do on a farm besides the chores and think of the blessings which are to come with springtime. At Christmas I mailed them some trifle, perhaps a picture of their baby taken on an idle Sunday afternoon. Along came the end of May and with it my letter was dispatched advising them of the day of my proposed arrival. Of course, my room was all ready and waiting for me. There I annually enjoyed for the next ten years a visit with the family and a session with the apparently expectant

trout. Then the farm was sold without my knowledge or consent, but I became a part of the chattels.

An acquaintance who was about to buy a tract of wild land in Ulster County wished my opinion as to whether the brook flowing through it was a real home for trout or only an alleged one. He was not a fisherman but yearned to be one. At his insistence we first visited a tackle shop and if he has not since become an expert angler it is surely not because of a stinted outfit. Thinking of the time long years before when a salesman imposed upon my ignorance by selling me a lot of flies big enough for bass or salmon and gaudy enough to infuriate a bull, I selected for my tyro companion only the things that experience had proved to be most desirable.

He certainly looked like the real thing as he followed along the bank of the stream, carefully studying the manipulation of my rod and awaiting with patience the rise that never came. The brook proved to be as sterile of trout as though it were the outlet of an acid plant, which, indeed, it may have been. However, this did not subdue the ardor of the would-be piscator. He asked if there were any real trout streams in that part of the country. The day was drawing to a close when

after a run of some thirty miles we drew in at Grahamsville. Friends who had fished the Never-sink in that vicinity had told me of their success and I was anxious to try it. Inquiring of a native, we were told that the best fishing water lay several miles above and that Charlie Blank, who lived close by, occasionally took care of fishermen whom he knew but would doubtless refuse hospitality to strangers. This aroused our interest. We recognized his house from the description given us. To my knock, a man opened the door and peered at me through the gloom.

"Hello, Charlie," I exclaimed, grabbing his pendent hand. He appeared both surprised and pleased. Not to lose any of the momentum gained, I continued briskly, "I have a friend out here in the car. We want to spend the night with you if you can accommodate us."

He brushed his hand across his face, apparently to clear a vagueness from his mind, and replied haltingly that he thought he could take care of us. While we were eating a late supper he sat opposite, leaning his chair against the wall and gazing straight at me. The look was hard, portentous. His only responses to my forced sallies were occasional grunts. My embarrassment became tangled with a

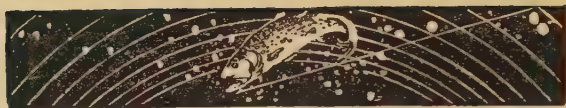
rapidly increasing fear that he was about to turn us into outer darkness. Finally, having cleared away the haze to his own satisfaction and seeking to entrap me, he innocently asked, "Where hev I seen you afore, stranger?" Well, there it was at last. Like murder it had to come out. His emphasis on the word "stranger" gave me acute indigestion and I placed a napkinless hand to my mouth to ease the escaping air bubbles. I knew that it would be ill advised to prolong the deception, as much as we needed a place to spend the night. There may have flitted through my subconscious brain the story of how little George Washington once got out of a bad hole. Either in emulation of his or of some other shining example, I frankly confessed that I had never enjoyed the pleasure of seeing him until he stood before me in the open doorway. Then I explained at length what the man in the village had told us.

Perhaps it was the ever-pleasant ring of truth or, more likely, the innocent and harmless appearance of my retiring companion in his spotless fishing regalia, that completely altered the demeanor of the mountaineer. He burst into a hearty laugh and, reaching out his calloused hand, said, "Shake, partner. The joke's on me. You had me locoed all right

ON FINDING STOPPING PLACES

and you done her up brown. No one hain't never stopped here afore 'thout bein' interdooced." To show his faith in us, he retired to the cellar with a pitcher. In hard cider we pledged eternal friendship again and again until far into the night.





SUPERSTITIONS

IT is natural that mankind has become peculiarly sensitive to the unreal. As children our minds are stimulated beyond even the power of truth by imaginative tales of the exploits of pixies, gnomes and hobgoblins in the elfin realms of fairies and dreams. Belief in the fanciful becomes a very serious part of life itself; nothing could be more real. When the time comes for these delightful companions of early youth to scamper away forever there is left a great void of loneliness. The very last precious fancy of childhood is blasted with the discovery that Santa Claus is no more; then all Christendom becomes littered with poor little aching hearts, yearning for other unbelievable beliefs. In after years the trained mind of the erring husband readily invents, as occasions may require, helpful fairy tales which his admiring wife, also merely a grown-up child, finds enjoyably convincing despite easily recognized evidence of their sophistry.

From fairies to superstitions is but a short step. Doubtless most of us, if placed upon the rack or

SUPERSTITIONS

subjected to the promptings of turn-buckles, would guiltily confess to an irresistible credulity in certain omens and unreasonable practices. Even the most grotesque fetish is not difficult to worship when it may be done in secret, which accounts for an almost universal reliance upon the supernatural in one form or another.

The farmer says nothing to his neighbor when the moon fixes the time for planting his corn; likewise the goddess of night also tells confidentially the superstitious woman when to snip off the ends of her unbobbed hair to make it grow thicker; the sentimental girl kisses her thumb surreptitiously after stubbing her toe; every one consciously avoids walking under a leaning ladder and being crossed, in path, by a black cat. But none of all these deviations from the line of reason is to be committed under the observation of others. The one outstanding addict of superstition who appears to revel in his shameless fanaticism is the fisherman. While he may look upon each of the many other rites as being perfectly silly, he boldly and proudly spits upon his hook to insure good luck. He does it with the same mechanical regularity as, when a boy, he used to kneel at his bedside hurriedly before jumping in.

This baptismal ceremony, which has always begun with the childhood of each generation, still vigorously persists notwithstanding that there has never been found any difference whatever between the catches of its devotees and of the very few who spurn it. I admit that the permanent wave across my abdomen was caused by stooping to pick up thousands of pins on the street for fear some weak-minded pedestrian might take to walking on his hands and get hurt, but I have invariably fought shy of spitting on a fishhook. This statement would hardly be worth recording by itself, but my abstinence in that respect is very closely allied to a matter of possible psychological importance. After many years of patient suffering under the spell of a hoodoo, I believe I have at last discovered a much more profitable outlet for the excess production of saliva over that needed for home consumption—a direct road to financial affluence.

My discovery had a very unpleasant beginning, like many of our greatest consolations, such as learning to smoke. Years and years ago I used to lunch daily with a most delightful Virginian of an old and highly respectable family. Lower Broadway at that hour was packed with either hungry or freshly fed humanity even in those days. As we

SUPERSTITIONS

were wont to saunter along with the crowds I frequently felt rather than saw my friend remove his hat, spit in it and serenely put it back on his head. Could it be possible that such a well groomed man of refinement had done a thing so utterly vulgar! Surely I must have been misled by an indirect, distorted vision. While trying to reconcile these conflicting thoughts when out with him the following noon, suddenly off came his hat again. This time I faced about and watched his every move intently so there might be no further doubt. With studied deliberation and unerring precision he certainly repeated the offensive action, meanwhile continuing the conversation as though nothing unseemly had occurred. My amazement was extreme. He must have developed some very strange mania, I was sure. Still, the affront had been too great for me to adopt a tone of either pity or mercy when I demanded that he explain why he had committed such a disgusting breach of common decency.

"Did you not see the cross-eyed man who just passed us?" he inquired.

"No," I replied icily. "What had he to do with it?"

In a soothing drawl he stated with great earnestness that a cross-eyed person looking in one's gen-

eral direction becomes a most virulent hoodoo unless the dreadful influence is promptly dispelled. This was not only possible, but the baleful authority could positively be transformed into a talisman of good luck by adopting the radical measure that had been performed by him in the crowded thoroughfare. While listening to his extraordinary avowal, there came over me a sickening feeling that this otherwise charming gentleman, this able attorney who had never lost a jury verdict, was after all at heart merely a stalking priest of voodooism in a most pernicious form. My aversion to his theory froze the unkind remark which I was tempted to fling back at him. Mistaking my silence for approval, he continued. "My old colored mammy taught me this priceless, ah, superstition, as you may call it. It is peculiarly fair in its operation. I know of perfectly happy, prosperous families with one of their members afflicted and all of them as innocent as babes about this belief. To people who are ignorant of its existence it is absolutely harmless, but those having knowledge of it and failing to show it proper respect are quickly visited with dire misfortune. You must not wait to act until you find yourself alone; it must be done at once or the blight will surely descend upon you.

The more people there are to witness your observance of the rite, naturally the more you will be flustered at first. The greater your embarrassment, the richer your reward. Half an hour's stroll on Broadway is worth more to me than a whole field of four-leaf clovers."

At that moment his managing clerk, returning from court, espied him among the throng.

"Mr. Edwards," he announced, "a decision in the merger case has just been handed down. It is in our favor."

"Very good. Thank you." We walked on.

He was so altogether sincere and companionable apart from this weird manifestation that I decided against breaking our friendship. However, I did not hesitate to accept every opportunity to ridicule and condemn his preposterous belief in this form of the supernatural. Instead of losing his temper, he tried patiently to convert me, as though I were a heathen bound for everlasting damnation.

"Of course," he acknowledged, "it is a downright vulgar demand that is made upon us, but we are not to be criticised for that. We must just submit, that's all. Otherwise we should have to be content with bucking the tide all our lives, as most people do. Don't you understand," he persisted

anxiously, "that your possibilities are almost limitless when fortune favors each endeavor?"

There was a tone of pleading in his voice, for I believe he was really fond of me. He earnestly wished me to share his belief and his success. On various occasions he had confided to me quite a little of his business affairs. I now reflected that everything he attempted appeared to break his way. Naturally I had always attributed this to his extraordinary ability and sound judgment. As to legal matters I could readily understand that he might have accepted only such retainers as were bound to lead to victory. On the other hand, how was he in position to know in advance every movement of the stock market? To Burton Edwards, investments were obviously an open book, for when he bought a stock it shot up; when he sold the market short those particular securities tumbled. About this time he won a litigation for a financially crippled oil company and accepted a block of their wild land for his fee. The first well drilled on it proved to be a tremendous gusher which, with the sale of the land, added a quick million to his assets.

"Of course, it could not have been otherwise," he remarked when telling me about it.

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Was such luck obtainable by spitting in one's hat? Nonsense! Rubbish! Rot!

Edwards was passionately fond of reading and often complained that his eyes were not so keen as they used to be; that the print of many of the old editions that interested him most tried him sorely. The lenses of his glasses were of such great magnifying power that they gave to his eyes a peculiarly unnatural appearance. He was very conscious of this and disliked wearing them on that account.

"Well," he said to me one day, "it will not be long now before I can say good-by to the busy world and devote the remainder of my life to relaxation in the quiet of my old home town. When I shall have left here I want to think that you will avail yourself of the opportunity I am bequeathing to you."

"You mean spitting in my hat?" I asked.

He nodded.

"Never," said I, stubbornly.

Within the following month he wound up his business affairs, which consisted mainly of presenting his law practice to his managing clerk. He had purchased a fine, old, run-down estate near his native home some time before and had expended vast sums in restoring such of its former glories as had

been dimmed by time, so everything was ready for his retirement. He had never married, nor had the desire ever returned to him until now, since he lost to another the wonderfully beautiful auburn-haired creature who used to take those wild rides over the Virginia hills upon her spirited white pony. How often he had thought of her lately! Her husband had been killed in the Great War, but she had since had several years in which to mourn away her grief.

"Sally had one child, a boy, as I recall," he remarked half to himself. "I wonder if he would be an obstacle." Edwards closed his eyes to rest them as he sat back in an easy-chair at my home, where he was spending his last week-end before going South for good.

Some years later I visited Mr. and Mrs. Edwards at "Live Oaks." On one of the warm afternoons we half reclined in silken netted lounging chairs beneath the flower-laden pergola. A muffled atomizer of silent force drew from an alabaster pool its delicately scented water and fanned it aloft in an iridescent spray to perfume and cool the air before settling in tiny brilliants upon the tessellated pavement at our feet. In a musical voice which responded to every shade of meaning, Mrs. Edwards

had been cheerfully reading to her husband for an hour or more, meanwhile permitting the tips of her fascinating fingers to tease the waiting hand which he had upturned upon the spreading arm of his chair. Eventually the fingers were caught napping; the book was laid aside. It was then that I learned from them both the rest of this story.

When my friend left New York he fully realized the need of a wife with whom to round out a successful and happy life. The thought gave him no little uneasiness. There was a lurking fear that the place which had been held so long vacant in his heart might for some unknown reason never be filled by the only woman who could give him happiness. Still, being accustomed to success, he felt that an affair that meant much more than any amount of additional wealth ought not to go wrong. Having engaged competent help to manage his estate on a scale consistent with his great fortune, he spent the first week there entertaining friends of his youth and eagerly listening to stories of what had happened during his long absence.

When informed that Mrs. Thurston was considered the most stunning beauty in all Virginia, he was appalled at the obvious difficulty that suddenly confronted his great ambition. Of course, he

knew that as a girl she was perfectly superb but he had prepared himself to now find her somewhat faded, like lilies on the altar at the end of an Easter service. He definitely wanted her that way so that his chance of winning her might be better, but still he could not bear to think of her losing the bewitching dimple in her left cheek, the graceful undulations of her auburn hair, the radiant color that played here and there beneath her velvet skin, the heavenly deep blue of her long-lashed eyes, the seductive cherry color of her soft lips, or the faultless outlines of her healthful body.

"O God," he prayed that night, "it is meet that the hand of Time shall have laid its safeguarding impress upon my beloved, but I beseech thee to preserve for my sight these trifling gifts for which my very soul doth crave most humbly."

The supplication, he knew, was a selfish one and as soon as it was uttered he felt sure it would get him nowhere. His sleep was troubled and his awakening unrefreshed. During that day, without appearing to inquire, he learned another fact about Mrs. Thurston which banished all gloomy fears and put him in high spirits. The statement of a neighbor that she was forced to live very unpretentiously with her son on the meager income derived

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from her late husband's war insurance proved him to be a perfectly balanced hypocrite.

"I am very sorry, indeed," he said. He was not sorry at all; he thrilled with guilty satisfaction.

Restless under the restraint of the quiet town, he began wooing his first and only sweetheart without further delay. He did it in the same confident manner that had contributed so much to the power of his forensic efforts before high courts. In fact, his legal training prompted him first to submit to Mrs. Thurston a written brief in which he plainly declared that he had never ceased to love her and that he had returned to the South with the express intent of making her his wife if she would deign to permit him to present his claim to her hand in person.

It may be assumed that she had followed with pride the career of this distinguished lawyer, as reflected by the metropolitan press. She knew that he had never married. Often of late she had permitted herself to wonder why, for her heart was always ready with its pleasing answer. While never allowing the faintest regret to assail her for having married a poor man, she reflected more than once that if Burton had been the one to find her lying beside the bridle path with a broken collar bone

and therefore the one to have tenderly carried her home in his arms, her life from then on might have been cast in a very different mold.

When the chauffeur brought the document, inclosed within an envelope bearing "Live Oaks" embossed upon its flap, she read it with such nervous haste that it made no mental impression whatever; only disjointed thoughts whirled through her brain, thoughts too startled to register. Then, taking a deep breath to help restore calmness, she read the surprising proposal again while the messenger stood in the hall, for he had been instructed to await an answer. Mrs. Thurston's second reading of the letter brought a feeling of resentment that Mr. Edwards, whom she had not seen for more than a decade, had dared address her in such a bold manner. She had been courted by many gallants during her widowhood but never before in such a brutally frank way. He had evidently lost all sense of propriety in his mad rush for wealth. Surely, he must be an interesting freak. Once more she read the strange epistle, this time allowing her eyes to dwell upon the finish, "Always yours." A faint thrill of her old sentiment for Burton merged with a sense of the ludicrous and, impulsively casting aside all

formality, she dismissed the messenger with a note as follows:

"Would you like to have tea with me at four o'clock to-morrow afternoon? I am very curious to see you."

Promptly at the stated hour Edwards walked up the gravel path bearing a huge bouquet of violets, her favorite flower, which he had hurriedly procured from the nearest city. He noted the simple charm of the place, cloistered from the public road by a neat picket fence; there were smoke bushes at either side of the entrance walk, which turned gracefully through a rare flower garden of perennials sheltering a large, heart-shaped bed of pinks which was punctured to its very center by an arrow of bleeding hearts. All this he saw through a haze, for he purposely had avoided wearing his disfiguring glasses on this momentous occasion. He groped for the knocker and the door was opened wide by a lad whom Edwards saw had flaxen hair; the detail of the boy's face was lost to his poor, unaided sight.

"Won't you come right in, Mr. Edwards?" the boy said invitingly, with a gracious bow. "Mother is expecting you."

He placed his hat on a peg of the walnut rack in the hall and was welcomed at the door of the cozy living-room with the genuine hospitality for which Southern homes have long been famous. In her voice he recognized the same sweet music as of old, and her form, to which a plain gown of sheerest dimity clung affectionately, was rounded even to his dim vision into an exotic flower of surpassing loveliness. In those days men had not been taught to admire flat chests and spindling legs. Edwards for a time was rendered almost speechless by the dazzling beauty of his hostess. "If Hogarth lived to-day he might choose at random any curve of your body with which to illustrate the perfect line of beauty," he thought. "Wonderful!" he exclaimed unconsciously, and added quickly, "fine weather," to hide his confusion. This trite, ungrammatical comment was recalled by Mrs. Thurston later as being the only jarring note in the conversation of the most brilliant and engaging person she had ever met. Over their teacups they talked about everything except the definite object of his call. With consummate skill he led her memory back to the period of their first meeting, she entering high school and he starting on his last term; to the big snowstorm which was intended to

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and did remind her of their make-believe fight and of the kiss he stole when rubbing her cheeks with snow; to the time he was suspended from college for the balance of the term because of having been adjudged the leader in all sorts of escapades, which he had promised her would never be repeated; to their last evening together before he went to the big city in the North where he was to start his fortune and then return for her.

Under the spell of his attractive personality, Mrs. Thurston soon became transformed into a sentimental girl again, sparkling with animated pleasure as she recounted the amusing exploits that they had shared. Edwards loved every inflection of her voice; he adored her peculiarly gurgling laughter. The nearest approach to its captivating sweetness he had ever heard was the melodious cachinnation of Frances Starr as "The Rose of the Rancho." Incidents galore were reviewed in rapid succession, reminding each how closely their lives had been interwoven until not long before she wrote him of her engagement, at which time she hinted as delicately as words would permit that it was against nature for her to wait longer, long enough for him to become established in his legal practice. The ten years that had passed between

then and now seemed to them both that afternoon to have been actually only a brief interruption of the normal course of their mutual affections. Edwards was elated beyond measure at what he took for granted was great progress in his courtship, but, not wishing to incur the dangers of precipitancy, he was compelled to exert the whole power of his will to check his ardor whenever tempted, as he often was, to repeat his written declaration and to require an answer.

Mrs. Thurston, knowing instinctively what was in his mind struggling for expression, began to wonder if her mental horizon was sufficiently broad to hold his affection beyond the brief afterglow of a honeymoon. Such an idea would have been quite absurd in connection with any other man of her acquaintance, even any one of the several admirers who had paid homage to her ever since the reception given in her honor by the Averills at their home in Washington. Without appearing to make any display of his erudition, this noted lawyer radiated intelligence of such a high order that she quailed before the thought of eclipsing the brilliance of his mind by permitting it daily contact with her own. Charm and beauty might be considered a fair exchange for wealth and learning;

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other women might continue to barter on those terms, but, as for her, she could not endure the thought of being considered ignorant by her husband. Such an experience would be bound to wither her, body and soul, especially after having been looked up to as an authority for so long by the townfolk. During that short afternoon he had made several casual references which meant nothing at all to her; knowledge which had never chanced to penetrate her restricted environment. How at a loss for an intelligent comment she had been when he referred unfavorably to Malthus in connection with his observation that even less of the neighborhood plantations were now required for food than when he was a boy!

"Who, the deuce, was Malthus?" she wondered.

She felt conscious that Burton must have noticed at once the stamp of provincialism upon her conversation. This he might excuse, but ignorance! During the prescribed period of retirement following upon Mr. Thurston's death she had begun making friends of books. First prompted by loneliness, her occasional reading soon developed for her such an interest in literature, ancient and modern, as to engross all her idle hours. It was only because she had climbed far above the obscuring valley of

average learning that from the hillside she was now in position to obtain a clear view of the endless mountains of knowledge which reached to the distant horizon. The thought, however, that some man who was evidently wrong about something had been one to betray to this scholar the depth of her unenlightenment made her very resentful.

"Darn Malthus, anyhow, whoever he was," she declared harmlessly to herself.

Of course, she thought, under such a disparity of learning as existed between them marriage must result in unhappiness for both. Having once entered love's lottery and won at least a son who was the constant delight of her heart, she decided that it would be wholly unwise to risk the loss of her present contentment, as much as she dearly yearned for what might be bought with wealth.

For some time the light had been waning, Edwards noticed. Now it had become quite dusky. A dense cloud must be obscuring the sky, he thought. Mrs. Thurston's son had been amusing himself at the other end of the room during the conversation of these adults, talk which was of no interest to him. After solving the block-letter puzzle that lay complete upon the rug he arose quietly, and his mother called to him,

"Burton, dear, come and sit beside me."

Instantly Mr. Edwards, who was not aware of the boy's presence, flushed with confusion. The seraphic thought darted through his mind that the sweetest woman in the world was surely to be his very own at last. Unused to lovemaking, instinct came generously to his rescue and directed his awkward steps rapidly toward her. He was stopped by her sudden exclamation.

"Oh! I meant my boy, Mr. Edwards." With eyes lowered, she added, "And now I must make a confession to you. When our child was born I insisted upon the privilege of choosing his name. My husband, who was most considerate, agreed that inasmuch as he had me I might call our son any name I wished from Abednego to Zachariah; so I named him after you. Do you mind?"

She stated the fact so candidly that the loss of the coveted seat by her side was soothed by the high compliment that she had bestowed upon him even after they both had every reason to believe that their lives had been parted forever.

Turning about in confusion, he beheld only the dull outline of his chair and in returning to it stumbled over an ottoman, which annoying clumsiness emphasized his increasing dependence upon

his glasses. At the same time there came over him an indefinable apprehension that all was not right with him, but this fear was promptly dispelled as he perceived that with each moment the darkness was becoming more intense. He could now see only the vague shapes of the most substantial pieces of furniture.

"How very dark it has grown," he observed.

"Dark?" echoed Mrs. Thurston, thinking she had not heard him aright.

"Yes. I recall a similar occasion when I was a boy. Dense storm clouds hovered over us ready to burst, just like these, and it became so dark at mid-day that the chickens actually went to roost, thinking night had come."

The sun shone from an azure sky through the latticed window, stamping a brilliant geometric pattern aslant upon the old-fashioned rag rug at his feet. Bees with dripping mandibles flew from the many nectar-laden blossoms to their storehouse beside the kitchen garden. A poised humming-bird tenderly pressed its dainty bill into the purple lilac blossoms outside the window ledge. Beneath the grateful shade of a spreading pine which marked one end of the grape-arbor, the boy's pet lamb cavorted with graceless abandon. Flattened against a

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limb of the densely leafed pine, out of the glare of the sunlight, there lay a nighthawk taking its daily siesta, looking more like a knot than a bird.

Alarm that springs upon one with no presaging fear demands an involuntary outcry. Despite her consternation, Mrs. Thurston mastered her feelings only through having been prepared to believe that Edwards was afflicted with acute ophthalmia. From the time of his entrance into the room he had closed his eyes frequently for several seconds, as though in pain. At first this action seemed to her very peculiar, but when repeated every minute or so she concluded that it was a mannerism, possibly due to thought concentration. From his last remark, however, a complete understanding of his terrifying situation dawned upon her, dismaying her beyond the power of speech for the moment. The tension at her throat gave an unnatural expression to her voice as she remarked with enforced calm:

"I reckon we have more heavy thunderstorms down here than you have been accustomed to in New York. By the way, Mr. Edwards, are your eyes giving you any trouble? I see that you press your handkerchief to them."

"No," he replied. "That is, none to speak of. I

always have been nearsighted, you know. This afternoon the unusual darkness has annoyed me more or less, as it must have you. The clouds have made such a thorough job of shutting off the sun that if it were not for the unequaled charm of the loveliest personality *extant* I would not know to whom I am talking. As the daylight faded away it seemed to me like one gauzy curtain after another being dropped before an object until it became almost completely hidden. Has it impressed you in the same way?"

She listened with increasing horror to the confirmation of her worst fears and, parrying his question, asked if he did not think it a wise practice for one to consult an oculist periodically as a preventive measure, as one goes to a dentist. Without waiting for reply, she continued, with suppressed emotion:

"I should like very much your company to Norfolk to-morrow morning. We have an eye man there who is becoming really famous. I am taking my boy up for an examination and it will be a comfort to have you with me. From what I have told the doctor, he feels very confident that he can straighten Burton's eyes by extending certain controlling muscles and without using the knife."

Suddenly a groan of abject despair escaped the lips of the man who had been condemned to darkness through his failure to pay tribute to the mightiest sacrament of his belief. Like a strong animal mortally wounded, his whole body writhed in agony. Hoping against what could not have been untrue, he snatched the sequestered glasses from one of his pockets as he advanced with maniacal swiftness and uncanny accuracy directly upon the innocent cause of his overwhelming misfortune. He lifted the cringing boy roughly from the embrace of his frightened mother and, holding him first up at arms' length, then nearer and nearer, he peered into the face of the lad with all the intensity of his being, but his sightless eyes had passed beyond the power of artificial aid. Releasing the boy and grasping his head between his palsied hands, he wailed, "My God, I am blind."

Terror, the unearthly terror of a living death, twisted and seared his face which but a moment before had beamed with the anticipation of a wonderful possession. With outstretched arms swinging to and fro ahead, he rushed toward where his maimed sense of direction told him the hat-rack stood, but instead of reaching it the bewildered victim plunged headlong across a frail rosewood di-

van, crushing it to the floor with the weight of his tortured body. There he lay inert, vanquished, like a lost soul before the closed gates of Paradise, moaning, "Too late! Too late!"

When she saw him fall, Mrs. Thurston abandoned all thought of self and, with tears of pity coursing down her cheeks, ran instantly to his aid. She guided him to a comfortable, high-backed chair and placed a downy pillow back of his restless head. Then followed the most natural scene in the world. She fervently kissed the poor eyes from which light had been denied perhaps forever; she crooned to him as though he were but a child; she placed her soft cheek beside his own and whispered into his ear the story which never grows old. The frightful, crashing tumult that raged through his brain was soon besieged and calmed by her sweet, angelic assurances, and, slowly emerging from the chaos with a final comprehension of all that had happened, he knew that he had won much more than he had lost. The horror of blindness faded completely away and a light of perfect bliss shone from his countenance. He reached for her hand, which she helped him to find, and, pressing it to his lips, he held it there in silent worship. Tears, not of grief or regret, but tears of supreme grati-

tude and happiness, fell unrestrained before her who was to guide his pathway from now on. The hushed room became the sanctuary of their communing loves.

"Tell me, Sally, dearest," he said hours later when the real twilight had come, "was it because of pity that you have consented to marry this sightless remnant of a man?"

"Partly," she replied with undisguised light-heartedness.

"And the other part?" he inquired hopefully.

"Because I find that you are not the scholar that I feared you were."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean this. Very soon after your arrival I became conscious of your extraordinary command of our language. Each time you spoke I was impressed more and more until your evident learning scared all thoughts of matrimony out of my head. I could only think of myself becoming another Xantippe, all on account of your wisdom. But when I heard you mispronounce a word my heart leaped with joy, for I then realized that you were only a human being after all."

"And what, pray, is the word?"

"You accented the second syllable of '*extant*.'"

"My darling!" he exclaimed, stretching out his arms to grasp her form in rapture. But she teasingly ducked and backed away.

"I am so glad," she said banteringly, "that my husband is not entitled to wear a peplos."

"Peplos?" he repeated blankly.

In the ecstasy of this further discovery she stepped forward with the lightness of thistledown into his still open arms.

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My unfortunate familiarity with this superstition eventually grew into a fear for the consequences of defying it. Really, it is wonderful how many Ben Turpins are to be encountered every day in a big city if one is dreading them. They confront one everywhere. Strabismus in one form or another is apparently the most general affliction of mankind. Many a night have I gone to bed fearing that some misfortune would surely grip me before morning. The dreadful jinx in both male and female garb never loosed its hold; still I resisted it. Even into the wilds it pursued me. One day when following an unfrequented back road to a trout stream I met face to face a cross-eyed woodchopper. Within the next ten minutes I slipped on a rock in the brook and cracked a patella. Matters of all sorts

continued to go wrong but I was never willing to attribute my misfortune to such a senseless cause.

Like the octopus that winds its smooth tentacles about its victim and patiently awaits the opportune time for its deadly thrust, the occasion arose soon after my return from "Live Oaks," and my iron will was broken into abject slavery. I had been devoting most of my time for several months to a very important business matter. On my way for the final conference and decision I rode on the rear platform of one of the old-type trolley cars, meanwhile filtering my proposed argument through tobacco smoke. Several men of evident respectability stood about me; other passengers filled the car inside. I stood at the rail looking backward into vacancy when, to my dismay, I became conscious that the truck directly following us was driven by the most acutely cross-eyed man I had ever seen. He faced front but appeared to take in everything on both sides of the avenue at once. I tried to convince myself that he had not looked at me, but at that second he cocked his head to one side after the manner of an intent hen. One of his eyes pierced me through and through like a stiletto. As though attacked by a basilisk, I recoiled. The horrid superstition had by now become so indelibly impressed

upon my mind after having witnessed so recently its tragic effect upon my friend that my hand involuntarily raised itself to my hat. There it hesitated and trembled in uncertainty. Every one on the car was looking at me, I was sure. What would they think of such an odious creature? No, I could not be guilty of so monstrous an affront, not even to strangers.

After appearing to readjust my hat, the hand came down and my jaw clamped tight in defiance. However, fears for the fate of my great enterprise started with renewed vigor. They chased themselves through my brain like squirrels in a revolving cage. Did I really dare to deliberately jeopardize one of the most important decisions of my entire business career, especially as the odds were already strongly against me? Though these strangers might scorn me as a leper, they were never likely to see me again. And what did I care about them anyway? So, with the assumed courage of a lion-tamer, I leaned over the rail toward the truckman, looking boldly right into the middle of his face so there could be no doubt about it, removed my immaculately lined headpiece and spit generously into its crown. Immediately the blood surged into my face from all quarters. My head was aflame; my feet

grew cold as ice; my arms were palsied and my legs unsteady; my heart thumped like an engine out of oil. All the passengers were looking with amazement and contempt at me—me, a pariah. This I knew to be so, although I could not lift my humiliated eyes from the floor to see. Presently the conductor stopped the car and I accepted the opportunity to escape.

A ten-minute walk to my destination gave my dazed mind time to clear. "The greater your embarrassment, the richer your reward." His words came back to me now so vividly after all those years. Pshaw! How utterly absurd! And yet the terse sentence, so like an axiom, kept running through my head like a sacred precept as I was ushered into the room where the board of directors was already assembled. One of them politely offered to take my hat, but I preferred to hold it. Within an hour all of the objections that at the last conference had appeared to be insuperable were overcome, either through a fortunate choice of words or by convincing arguments such as I had never felt myself capable of. Indeed, they may have been no better than I had used before, but, somehow, as I unconsciously smoothed the crown of my hat while it rested upon my legs, I felt all opposition

YE GODS AND LITTLE FISHES

surely slipping away. The desired arrangement was effected.

Never since have I failed to observe this superstition, or voodoo practice, or whatever else it may be profanely termed. Of course, it will continue with me to the grave. Even later, if St. Peter should happen to be on duty at the gate where I enter and if I should observe the truth of a certain rumor, based upon the deductions of our modern scientists, I shall feel safer first to spit in my hat before handing it to the bell-hop.





DOUBTING THOMASES

EVERY generation since the time of Christ has had in every community its Thomas of Didymus. He is to be found among the friends of all fishermen. Nor should he be discouraged, for without him we might lose all incentive for exaggeration and become uninteresting models of rectitude. He simply cannot expel the spirit of distrust and has given up trying.

It has been my good fortune for many years to enjoy the friendship of such a doubting Thomas. Often on my return from a fishing trip he would ask, "What luck?" He never does so any more. In reply to his inquiry, it never seemed necessary for me to magnify the size of the catch, but he never believed a word of my statement and frankly intimated as much.

Regardless of the damning effect of sowing amidst my rare collection of tenderly nurtured morals the noxious seed of untruth, I decided to bring back with me next time evidence that would be incontrovertible. So I shopped among the toy stores until I found a Rough Rider hat such as

was worn at that time by up-to-date boy dolls. It measured about five inches from edge to edge of brim. This went into my kit with a camera. A few days later I thoughtfully selected from my creel three trout of moderate length; nine, ten and twelve inches respectively. To photograph the little hat in such a way that nothing else would appear to stamp the picture as a fake, some less tell-tale background than a building or fence or tree must be chosen. Behind the farmhouse I discovered a huge ledge of seamed rock with a vertical side of ample height and width for my purpose. After all vegetation had been removed from its crevices nothing remained to cast suspicion upon the illusion desired. The Lilliputian sombrero was hung on a nail driven into one of the seams of the massive stone and roundabout it the three trout were held similarly in place. The picture of those apparently monster fish was mighty good to look at.

Upon reaching home I soon came upon my ever-skeptical friend with his regulation question. Instead of replying orally, I dumbly handed the photograph to him. Here were three fish which, compared with a Rough Rider hat of adult size, ranged from eighteen to twenty-four inches in length. The picture first sent him into exclamations of amaze-

DOUBTING THOMASES

ment; it then filled him with remorse. After feasting his eyes upon it for some time he said most humbly, "I owe you a thousand apologies. I can now see that you have always told me the truth."





THE TRAGEDY OF THE ELM-TREE POOL

BASED upon the theory that all things are possible, the true sportsman never doubts a fish story. Here is a test.

Soon after my arrival one evening at a farmhouse which looked down upon a mountain stream in the distance, the contents of my fishing kit were emptied into various disorderly piles about the floor of the plain bedroom, which harbored no such catch-alls as bureaus or closets. By candle light I retired, thinking only of the joyous promise of the morrow. Presently, it seemed, there came through my chamber windows radiant glints from the rising, happy sun, welcoming me into its home circle with the genuine cordiality of a perfect host. The goddess of sleep was brushed aside, perhaps unkindly, like a thing which is left to its own devices after having served its purpose. The mere act of dressing was full of care-free joy, finding vent in the oft-repeated strain of a favorite song.

Outside were staged the festivities of an economic seraglio. The house yard was alive with

blithesome pullets, led hither and yon by the inimitable call of the adolescent rooster so that they might admire the proud swell of his protruding breast while he greedily gulped down such earth-worms as he had caught napping in the moist grass. Passing from the barn down the lane there filed a herd of slow-footed, limp-bagged, sleek-coated Jersey heifers, looking eagerly with their deerlike eyes toward pastures freshly atomized with gleaming vapor. Behind them a trained collie, swaying his tawny frame with the pride of responsibility, followed with mincing steps between fresh droppings; then barked back to his master that he had all the cattle safely lodged beyond the open bar-way.

I now hear the sturdy husbandman in the big kitchen below noisily swash the water from a tin basin over his bristly face. After a brief silence in which I visualize him standing before the remnant of a wavy mirror on the lambrequined mantel-shelf making a few passes through scant hair with an almost toothless comb, I know that he is ready to pay the highest compliment to the capability of his bustling wife.

The dulcet staccato of sizzling ham squeezes into my room through the stovepipe hole and finds

my hungry stomach no less alert to its aroma than my ear to its alluring melody. A habit often complied with only as a recognized physical demand suddenly becomes transformed, through the mysterious power of environment, into an appetite as ravenous as that of a timber wolf. The moving of chairs noisily across the bare maple floor announces better than a tinkling bell that breakfast is ready and I clatter with my trappings downstairs where I find a hearty welcome with both husband and wife. My host sits at the head of the table; he is coatless, but he wears a clean shirt in my honor. So I cautiously remove my weighted fishing coat and am at once declared by the wife to be one of the family.

“‘When in Rome,’ you know,” she reminds me with a friendly smile.

Our hearty breakfast is laminated with digestive conversation and tiers of maple-siruped griddle-cakes. Each moment of existence leads to an ever higher degree of felicity. Now comes the after-breakfast pipe! To a confirmed smoker, what else on earth is so pleasing to the senses! And did there ever exist a fisherman, equipped with rod and fly-box, headed for a trout brook, whose soul was not

TRAGEDY OF ELM-TREE POOL

aglow with a most perfect faith on a day like this;
a glorious morning in early June!

Skirting a field smoothly overlaid with the tender green of infant corn, nursing at each leaf point from a prismatic drop of dew, I turn through woodland toward the stream and am held enthralled by the magnificence of this forest of ancient patriarchs still in the prime of vigor whereas, I reflect, all humankind of their youth have been called away long, long ago. In solemn tribute to three great pines my head is bared in reverence. These towering monarchs proudly stand as though at attention, spaced equally apart in accurate alignment. They could not have been set by mortal hands. I wonder how God unaided found the time to place them so and make them grow alike!

Passing on, a timid cottontail and her attentive mate are frightened from their trysting place under the dead branches of a prostrate tree. Though flying flags of truce, they zigzag quick retreat. Lest I might crush the spicy solace of the huntsman, my feet are made to clear the lowly wintergreen, now in fragile blossom and later to become robust even beneath the winter snows, like drops of blood shed in anguish for another summer gone forever.

My wandering steps lead by a covey of new-born chicks. The wily mother partridge, mistaking my intentions, assumes broken wings to lead me away from her precious brood, but, on gaining assurance that I mean no harm, her trusting chirp brings back from hidden places each member of her little family.

Now as I stand unseen on a huge boulder which bears the freshet markings, four mink cubs make their way in silent Indian file back into the woods with thirsts gratified. From a ledge festooned with lichen a tiny rivulet, laden with the refreshing purities of its enchanted bower, drips pearls of iridescent brilliance, cold as iced champagne.

And here the crystal ribbon is spread before me, gurgling as sweetly as a pillowed babe and flashing her most bewitching smiles as she ripples by. For eons she has laved devotedly the feet of the imperishable mountains whose towering peaks are etched with marvelous detail against the restful blue of the cloudless sky. I stand transfixed in peaceful adoration.

Hanging over the bank are graceful wands of red-ripe berries and close beside there nestles a dainty spray of violets. Bees hum their harvest song among myriad blossoms. The redolent air fills my

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eagerly expanding lungs to their very depths. A blithesome goldfinch in billowy flight calls out its cheery greeting to a scarlet tanager. Braving tempest, hunger and thirst, this marvel of beauty has winged his way through four thousand miles of trackless space to be here. Of course, he must be welcomed. Once more the goldfinch wafts his sweetest song into the ruby jeweled tree. From the depths of the willow copse come the unmatched strains of a cloistered thrush, while a friendly bobolink sways up and down on the topmost tip of a slender reed and warbles its scant melody at everything within sight. Butterflies vie in color with the gaudy devil's paintbrush and the brazen ox-eyed daisy. Even the shrinking anemone takes courage and mingles her charms with the rest. Fully dressed in resplendent liveries of varied green, widespreading trees high up the banks pass to each other sweet compliments through whispering leaves. Aloft to them the opening buds of mountain laurel turn their ascetic faces to receive a final benediction before giving way to the more commanding glory of the stalwart rhododendron at their side.

Ferns caress with lacy fingers the purling water as it sweeps merrily along to its destiny of turbulence and brine. The beauteous trout, too, revel in

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the pure joy of living. From sheer mischief they throw themselves wantonly into the air at flying insects which they well know are out of reach; like children bathing, they love to feel the splash of water.

How sublime! And with what profound gratitude I thank the Maker of this wonderful drama of life! Never before have I felt so close to Nature. Surely, my mood is not for fishing; another day less soul searching must do for that. To refuse this spiritual communion which has been so bountifully spread before me would seem no less than sacrilege.

So, high above the water I recline upon a yielding rug of moss, with shoulders resting against a great elm which half cradles with its massive roots a perfect home for the supreme masterpiece of living waters—the trout. The head of this pool has been made staunch against the mighty rush of freshets by an enormous rock edged far into the bank and held to its place by gnarled anchors from the elm. Against this immovable buttress the hurrying current dashes furiously, only to spend itself in impotent foam of snowy white, then spread wide its arms in calm submission. Aquatic granddaddy-longlegs caper about in the eddies with the abandon of fancy skaters; they dent but cannot puncture

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the placid surface with their ethereal lightness. Entire families of industrious minnows nose the bottom for food and rise quickly to investigate each tiny floating speck which promises to these diminutive fish a potential feast. From a stone at the water line a stealthy crawfish tears a chip-encased larva and slowly backs with it into his rock-bound cavern, there to crush out and devour its juicy vitamins. Paying no heed to these ancillary midgets, a full dozen trout, too young to dream of war and conquest, skylark innocently about like schoolboys at recess, or careen against the stones to make their beauty spots more vivid.

From one of the many capacious pockets of my coat I draw forth a small volume by Thoreau. What can so well suit the occasion as the tranquil philosophy of this saintly naturalist? Through his spirit I contemplate reverently the very wonders which surround me. Between turning pages I watch an ever guilty crow float lazily overhead, issuing his cowardly challenge as he is wont to do when he believes no enemy is within harmful distance. I marvel at the force of the blows driven against the trunk of my elm by the crested woodpecker which clings to its side while pecking for grubs beneath the bark. I mentally applaud the

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quick jaw snap of a frog which ends forever the trials of a vagrant fly. I worship the belated sprig of arbutus which reaches its fragrant blossoms just as far toward me as its short little arms will permit. Accepting with gratefulness this most prized of all wildflowers, I lower myself more comfortably still upon my luxurious couch and place it at my cheek. Surely, its incense can inspire only the beautiful, the true, the divine.

Presently I behold in the pool at my feet two great trout. They have entered it simultaneously, one from the head, the other from its foot. Even to a hair's breadth they are of the same size. One is a native; the other, a brown. Both are males, each with a murderous hook at the end of his lower jaw. Not having yet seen each other, they glide majestically about the wide expanse of water, which they note with approval must attract more than its share of choice winged morsels. Each appraises with satisfaction the deep hiding place among the roots, and beams with a sense of ownership upon the shoals of succulent minnows. Like the responsive muscles of a perfect horse, their flesh rolls with animation under skin of velvet smoothness. Survivors of their era, their strength and craft have

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made them so. Innate is the grace of these two gladiators, for such, I feel, they must surely be.

On the same instant these self-appointed kings of the stream discover each other. I distinctly see the glint of challenge dart from eye to eye. Of course, there can be but one ruler over such a rare domain; it is worth fighting for even unto the last drop of blood. I acknowledge to myself that my sympathies are all with the native, but I intend to see fair play unless the brown gets the better of the fight. Now they glare at each other in the same fierce manner that the famous John L. adopted to intimidate his adversaries in the prize-ring before striking a blow. While singling out vulnerable places for attack, their bodies are as motionless as a pair of stoical bulldogs.

Now, as if released by the touch of an electric button, they crash together head on, like streaks of lightning. Both appear dazed but, backing off to get another flying start and meanwhile taking big gulps of water to free their blood-glutted gills, they again come together with a vengeful yearning for complete annihilation. Their expanded jaws are snapped together and interlocked with the power of steel traps. The native, realizing that his teeth

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are less damaging than those of his opponent, forces the brown to loosen the tenacious grip on his snout by pressing the knob at the tip of his lower jaw against his enemy's throat. The effect of this pressure is the same as strangulation. They break and again break apart.

As though by magic the waterbugs have disappeared; minnows shudder in fright in the distant shallows; wedged here and there beneath stones and roots, the young trout hide in terror.

Now the aim of each warrior seems to be to twist out an eye or a belly fin. They plunge and tear with the fury of wild animals. The water boils with action. Through the churning foam I am thrilled to see that the brown has lost an eye. The bare socket glistens like the inside of an oyster shell. In reprisal he tweaks from the native two fins in rapid succession, the left ventral and anal. The pectoral, dorsal and caudal fins are more firmly held by muscular flesh and are probably safe; that is my consoling thought. Darting around to the blind side, the shrewd native catches the brown's tail in his wide-stretched mouth.

The brown, knowing that he is about to be eaten alive, summons all his strength into a powerful swing of his head and succeeds in engulfing an

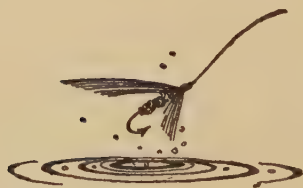
TRAGEDY OF ELM-TREE POOL

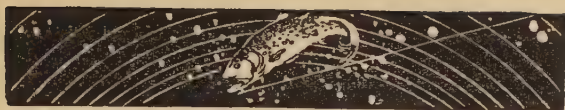
equally large portion of the native's tail. Both begin swallowing! All visible fins are working to their utmost. The formation and speed are those of a huge pinwheel that has been touched off. Around and around the mass whirls with bewildering velocity. Gills are extended like the pouch of a pelican as the minute teeth continue ever working forward, each drawing little by little his mortal enemy into a widespread thorax! The radius of the revolving ball becomes smaller and smaller. Both have now conquered the arduous dorsal summit; they are on the down grade in a neck and neck race for their lives! The rapidity with which each is being devoured now increases as the diameter of the ungorged part diminishes. Slowly the rotary movement is coming to a stop, for most of the propelling force is gone. Inch by inch the brown swallows what is left of the native; inch by inch the native swallows the remainder of the brown! In stupefied amazement, I realize that each fish has disappeared entirely within the other before my very eyes!

At this instant an ant climbed into my upturned ear, destroying all further contemplation of this devastating battle. My legs and body had been riveted to the earth by rheumatic arrows which

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became manifest while raising myself to a sitting posture. I then observed, with a pang of deep regret, that the thoughtless young trout, the busy little minnows and water sprites and the lone crawfish were all again following their chosen pursuits with no respect whatever for the memory of the great dead. Arising and turning homeward, I beheld the mirrored radiance of the setting sun focused directly upon the placid pool. This tribute, at least, I was gratified to accept as a fitting recognition of the unsurpassed courage of those vanished warriors and as a glorious consecration of the scene of their strange ending.





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OUR lives are altogether too short; that's certain. As soon as we get fairly started here, away we have to go somewhere else. Worse still, our very limited existence is mostly splotted with worries and responsibilities. The dull drab of business environment is accepted by custom as being its necessary hue. Murders, thug-gery, scandals, embezzlements, political chicanery and all other evils of mankind are spread bountifully before us by the daily press like an endless exhibit in a chamber of horrors. Reeking with such atmosphere, it is no wonder that imagination is becoming atrophied. Our milieu carries us farther and farther away from the blithesome realm of fancy. Never more may we hope to have our own "Arabian Nights."

And yet, let one of our present-day anthropomorphists cast off his formal mantle and go a-fishing in the wilderness if you would behold him transformed completely into a real man; a happy child of nature. In the twinkling of an eye the millionaire is mentally estranged from all his wealth and its worries; he is elevated to the peerage of sports-

manship on an equal footing with the chastened spirits of the pedantic schoolmaster, the unassuming accountant, the over-tired doctor, the underpaid preacher, the grandiloquent lawyer and all the rest who make up the congenial brotherhood of the mountain stream. Once freed from their irksome shackles, these untrammelled grown-ups are in really, truly fairyland.

Behold them now! They are loafing at ease on the spacious porch at general headquarters after a perfect day with the trout, followed by a satisfying dinner. The shades of evening have been drawn very slowly; twinkling stars without number are beginning to cast their glittering sparks through pure air that has never been breathed before. It is inhaled with the fragrant tobacco of many pipes and given back fervently like burnt offerings to a deity. The time for story-telling is at hand. There is the guttural sound of a throat being cleared for action. At once all desultory conversation ceases. The slumbering moon, aroused by the resonance which stirs the rarefied air, peeps inquiringly over the distant rim of the world and stays to listen.

It is the clergyman whom the spirit naturally moves first; his duty, he feels, is to lead his flock.

"My friends," he begins, then pauses impres-

sively. "My friends," he repeats, "I have to-day passed through an experience so strange and still so convincing that we may look for it to revolutionize our methods of trout fishing." Again he pauses, fearful of the effect upon his spotless reputation if, perchance, any one present should doubt the truth of what he wishes to reveal. Were he speaking from his pulpit, then all must go well. His fishing coat is orthodox enough but his faith in its power to supply the proper background for his almost unbelievable story is not reassuring. If he could now only feel the satisfying discomfort of his clerical collar! He holds the warm bowl of his smoking pipe close in his left hand and with his right he grasps an object lying across his knees, unseen by the rest in the gathering darkness. These employments give him courage and he resumes:

"I was working up through the Hopkins pasture where I found the cattle taking their midday drink and cool-off in the brook. All of them moved deliberately away as I came along except one Jersey heifer. She stood belly deep in the pool just below the leaning beech and seemed perfectly content to stay there. In fact, when she turned her head toward me there was in her great, round, fawnlike eyes a pleading look which induced me to sit on the

bank and rest until she might leave of her own accord. While admiring her sleek side and flank my attention was carried to her bag by a series of odd movements there. At first I thought they were nervous twitchings or perhaps were aimed voluntarily at dislodging some pestering fly."

"I can feel that my credulity is about to get stretched," softly breathes the ruddy faced advertising agent, as he settles back to more fully enjoy the process.

Without appearing to hear the interruption, the narrator continues:

"My friends, as we approach the climax you are to understand that I disclaim the privilege of the antinomian. I firmly believe that an untruth might send me to perdition. Now then: riveting my gaze intently upon the udder, I saw that it was being pressed up and pulled down with the same movement as though made by a sucking calf. The cause I could not discern, for the lower portion of the bag was submerged. It must be the work of some water animal, a mink or muskrat, I thought. Yet I dared not approach closer for fear of scaring it off before solving the mystery. I knew that my voice would not carry into the water, so I shouted at the heifer and she took a few steps forward. As

she moved into shallower water the surging ceased and with her next step I beheld hanging to one of her teats like grim death a brown trout all of two feet long!"

The men are now leaning forward open-mouthed listening with straining ears to this most unusual recital. The advertising agent is pressing something to his lips.

"By rapid observation," continues he of the cloth, "I took in at a glance the intentness of the fish and even hoped that I might capture it. Acting at once upon this impulse, I stole forward cautiously, crouching like an Indian. To my intense gratification I saw that the fish's eyes were closed tightly in complete absorption like a hungry babe at its mother's breast. A stride and I was within reach! A deft sweep of the net and the monster was mine! I firmly gripped both sides of the landing net, suspending its great weight, and turned sharply toward shore. I then had only one idea in mind. While I well knew that none of you would doubt for a moment what had been revealed to me, I should feel much better to open the trout in your presence and permit you to see the milk gush from its distended paunch. Alas, friends, such was not to be. A strong rap of its tail tore the net from rim

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to bottom and through it the trout went. As it dropped on its belly against the surface of the stream a perfect geyser of milk spurted from its mouth. Some of it splattered my waders. You are at liberty, my friends, to examine them, as well as the ruined net which I have brought to you as further evidence."

It is apparent that every one believes the minister's story, for no one accepts his invitation. The advertising agent passes something to the doctor, who tilts back his head, which, with an arm, are silhouetted against the everlasting firmament.

"You stated in the beginning that your experience might revolutionize trout fishing," remarks the schoolmaster eagerly. "Do you mean that in future we shall need equip ourselves with long-handled gaffs?"

"No; with heifers," answers the minister.

The ambient air becomes laden with an odor of artificial purity as a tall, thin man rises from his seat. He has evidently used carbolic soap through force of habit while washing his hands after manipulating the unsterilized knives, forks and spoons at the dinner table. The more emphatic pungency of iodoform is not required to firmly establish the

nature of his profession in the minds of those present. Furthermore, the impress of suffering humanity is plainly seen by the light of the moon to have been stamped indelibly upon his sympathetic face. As he takes a commanding position against one of the porch pillars in the direct line of the waiting ellipsoid, his companions know instinctively that he is a shining light either of medicine or of surgery.

His neck, when cuddled in repose against his body, is ringed by deep cracks between thin folds of flesh, except that in the back this monotonous annular arrangement is varied by a broken, checkerboard effect. Even in the gloaming it is obvious that he is not a handsome man, but the same was true of Bacon and Darwin and Spencer. He wears a beard, but so did they and so does George Bernard Shaw. While looking him over, the men recall that most of the greatest minds appear to have been plainly faced. Therefore, no prejudices stand in the way as the doctor thrusts his head forward toward the center of the assembly, thereby unfolding the accordion pleats and lifting high above his crimson tie a superbly developed Adam's apple. While this elongation of his neck disturbs an eruptive boil as well as several latent ones that appear to have colonized the wrinkled slopes where

the rear collar-button rides the bumps, he controls himself to a stoical degree, for, instead of wincing with pain, he beams effulgently upon the upturned faces.

As he leans there against the sturdy post one can imagine him standing beside the bed of a prostrate patient, looking frankly into the trusting eyes of the grief-stricken wife and saying to her in most soothing tones:

"I must put a pneumonia jacket on your husband at once. I may be able to save him, but if he can be pulled through it will be a miracle. You may call Dr. Blank in consultation if you wish confirmation of my diagnosis and of my treatment. He is our greatest specialist and he always confirms my work, which simplifies matters. However, you may use your own judgment, for it is you who are to be pleased."

But, actually, such thoughts are furthest from his mind. How to best begin the delivery of his great arcanum is his present problem. He deftly places a disinfectant lozenge upon his tongue to bar from his throat the bugs that have set to work in his maxillary sinus. Despite repeated injections into his arms of a serum that is known to be

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deadly to at least twenty different kinds, he expressed to a companion on the stream earlier in the day his fear that those which were now attacking him belong to one of the uncatalogued species, if, indeed, they were not the progeny of a certain gluttonous germ, the name of which sounded like "strip the carcass." In a voice that is modulated to the proprieties of the sick-room, he now starts the development of his apocalypse.

"It is not my intention to insert a spirit of gloom into this delightful gathering, but in order to prepare your minds for a full comprehension of the phenomenal scientific discovery which I plan to lay before the next International Medical Congress I must remind you that some day we all must die."

"Atta boy," chirps up the life insurance solicitor, shamelessly.

"Is this to be a fish story or sob stuff?" The question is peevishly shot from the far end of the porch against a muffled drum, for the ear that is turned in the insurgent direction ceased to function long ago.

"It seems most appropriate for me to bring this world-important matter first to the knowledge of

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this imposing group of men, especially as it has to do with both trout and turtles, though its deep significance relates to the *bono beefum*."

Sweeping the nonplussed audience with a look of superior intelligence, the pedantic schoolmaster explains, "Meaning the human body."

"Precisely," adds the doctor courteously. "Five years ago I became run down from overwork and went up into the White Mountains to rest and recuperate next to the very heart of nature. It rained every day I was there but this did not deprive me of my daily walk, on one of which tramps I ran across a perfectly beautiful little foamy brook. Strangely enough for that wild country, I found no trout in it, but, nevertheless, I fell in love with its active water. After inducing the owner of the farm through which it ran to sell me the fishing rights for twenty-five years, which I then thought would fully cover the unused span of my life, I got him to accept my check covering the entire period, fearing that he or his heirs might otherwise back out because of what I planned to do. With his receipt stowed safely in my wallet, I sent at once to a private hatchery for a dozen cans of trout fry and when they arrived I dumped them in. There must have been millions of them. I then

had no idea of the disastrous result of overcrowding a stream with fish.

"Like waiting patiently for your block of mining stock to make you rich," he continues with a wan smile, "I stayed away from them religiously until last summer, estimating that those four-year-old trout would then average nearly a foot and a half long. What I beheld when I anxiously reached the place where I had given the little fish their freedom went straight to the pit of my stomach like the shock of a crushed finger. I found, to my dismay, that my beautiful brook was as dry as a bone and grass was growing where it had flowed! When the honest farmer explained to me my egregious blunder I had my own stupidity alone to blame. My plans had gone so far askew that the kindly soul had not had the heart to write me about their failure. It seems that I had planted many times more fish than the stream could care for. During the first year, the farmer said, they had plenty of water to play about in after drinking all they wanted. During the second summer their thirsts kept exact pace with the supply. The following year they naturally demanded more drink than ever because of their increased size. This kept narrowing the stream in its bed until there

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was only room enough for them to shoulder against each other in close formation. The backs of those at the ends of the ranks were out of the water and these fish suffered cruelly from sunburn during July and August; then the skin peeled off, causing them to die right in their tracks like heroic soldiers. Only the center files were left for the fourth year. While you might think these remaining fish were the fortunate ones, their torture was the worst of all. They fought for drink like thirst-crazed men at a scant waterhole in a desert, standing on their heads to reach the precious and constantly diminishing trickle between the stones in the bottom of what was surely becoming an arroyo. Finally, the last one of them perished. As the sympathetic farmer told me this sad tale he was often compelled to cover his face with his handkerchief."

Tears are one of the evidences of a tender heart. The last remark of the doctor seems to have furnished an excuse for the use of many handkerchiefs, though the sobs are strangely hysterical, coming, as they do, from full-grown men.

"Why didn't the water reach its former level again after there were no fish to drink it?" asks the student.

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"That appeared odd to me, too, until the farmer explained it. During their final fight for life some of the fish, unfortunately, discovered all of the various spring sources and they sucked at these water veins so hard that in every case a vacuum was formed, stopping the flow permanently."

The uncanny laugh of a roystering loon on a near-by pond is startlingly inopportune, but the doctor resumes without apparent concern.

"And now I come to the turtle part of my story—the part that has to do with the *bono beef-um*. There are already too many painless ways for ending life, but science has thus far been able only to scratch the surface of life extension. Biology proved long ago that characteristics of one organism may be transmitted to another of a different kind, but when it came to inserting the element of old age into mankind there was nothing from which to extract it. This problem of all the past ages, my friends, I have solved! To-day, in the light of my discovery, there is no reason why, if we overcome the attacks of disease, we may not live so long as to look back at Methuselah as one who died in childhood."

The noise of shifting chairs is punctuated by exclamations that continue for some minutes.

"It is a fact of common knowledge that turtles attain to perhaps the greatest age of any living creature, and yet the oldest recorded age of any of these chelonia is about one hundred and sixty years. Therefore, as was proven in the case of Thomas Parr, who died in England at one hundred and fifty-two years, mankind enjoys so closely the honors of age with the lowly turtle that science has recognized no material gain in transferring to the human body the living cells of turtle protoplasm for this purpose, though I believe that a turtle serum is injected into fishermen who frequent the Adirondacks and Canada in June to make them more adept at snapping the black flies that hover about their faces.

"When I found my stream dried up I decided to spend a few days loafing, making my home with the farmer. One morning he led me into his woods for a stroll. There was one tree, a silver beech, into the trunk of which he had affectionately carved his initials when a boy. A pretty sentiment, I thought. Presently he pointed out to me a turtle, which of course reminded me at once of the transfusion theory with which I had already made him familiar. The farmer remarked that it looked like a pretty old one and I was about to pass on when it

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hissed at me like an angry gander. Surprised at this crotchety exhibition of temper, I then noticed that it was, indeed, a very aged specimen, for its head was warty and misshapen, and a film covered its dull eyes. Looking still closer, I became interested in a design on its back; so, giving it a tap with my stick, which tap was quickly followed by the withdrawal of its head into its shell, I picked it up and, to my uncontrollable joy, I was able to decipher, notwithstanding the erosion of thirty-eight hundred centuries, the unquestionable date of its birth in the handiwork of its Maker. As plainly as I now see you all before me, there is to be seen emblazoned upon the topmost shield of this real, living organism, which is now being fed on mushrooms in my laboratory at home, the momentous inscription, '1880 B. C.' "

The Supreme Court judge is whispering to the prosecuting attorney sitting next to him. The latter rises suddenly and, pointing an accusing finger at the guileless doctor, asks in the manner of one of authority:

"Doctor, will you now state to the jury—I say," lowering his threatening hand, "will you please tell us the name of this farmer?"

"Certainly. I can never forget it because of his

striking resemblance to his name. He has a very ruddy complexion and one of his legs is bent. His name is Brandywine Cruikshank."

"Thank you. That's all. Next!"

The portly toy-importer becomes popular at once by saying, "I know very little about trout fishing." Some of his hearers get up from their seats and look through the twilight to see who has had the frankness to make such an extraordinary admission.

"I have heard a friend of mine tell for years what a wonderful sport it is and so I decided to try it. I always thought there was nothing to it. Now I know it.

"But when it comes to salt-water fishing, ask me. I'll bet my car against one of the gadgets you call flies that I can get more pounds of fish in a morning down in Peconic Bay when the weaks or blues or porgies are running than this whole crowd can catch of trout in an entire season. And I haven't got to tramp all over hellangone to do it either. All I have to do is to sit pretty in a wicker chair on the poop of my yacht. My hook is baited for me and thrown overboard. I don't even have to bother with a pole. I just pull 'em up hand over

hand and sit back resting while they are taken off. That's what I call sport. And you've got something to show for your time besides a few little runts such as I use for bait."

"Does salt-water fishing afford one the same opportunity for study and experiment as the dainty brook trout?" asks the student.

"Sure. Why, I've just bought a farm in the mountains and have it already stocked with codfish."

"A farm stocked with codfish!" several exclaim in a single voice.

"Sure. I've got a brook a mile long. At my upper line I've had a wooden trough built and sunk across the stream. Lots of holes are bored through both sides and it is kept full of rock salt. The brook has got to flow through the salt and of course the water becomes briny. I had my man keep boring holes through the trough while I tasted the water that passed through until it got just as salty as the ocean. Then it was ready. Talk about study and experiment! It takes some taster to do this right; not too little and not too much. Yesterday just before I started to motor up here, the fish came that I bought from the Government. There were 10,000 fingerling codfish. At that age they call

'em codlets. They were dumped into the creek and are now having the time of their young lives."

"Who told you that this method of propagating the cod can be done successfully?" inquires the brain specialist.

"Why, the real estate agent who sold me the place."

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"Speaking of real estate agents," pipes up the financial editor of *The Universe*, "reminds me of how one of them helped me beat a competitor to a sale when I was a young man on the road for a wholesale drug house. Another drummer happened to get off the same train with me in a village down in Arkansas, named Wideners. It was so small and snuggled so close to the St. Francis River that you might have shoved it off the bank without creating any noise or making the water any muddier. After we had made our call upon the only druggist in town and had done no business except buy a couple of good five-cent cigars from him, we went to the hotel to wait for the stage.

"We listened to all our genial host had to tell us about the natural gas boom in that region and of the wonderful bass fishing they had in the river until the coming of the last freshet which tore out

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the bridge that crossed to Madison on the other side and carried all boats away down into the Mississippi. He had started to give us the exact measurements of some of these monster fish when the telephone bell interrupted. I recall that I felt relief at my escape from being made an accessory to what I perceived was his contemplated crime of exaggeration. Shortly I heard our boniface say, 'Yes, Kunnel Phinizy; two of 'em heah right now.'

"You know how a thing of no real importance will impress itself upon your mind when you've got nothing else to think about. It's like all hands aboard ship getting excited about a little bird that's lost at sea. Then I heard him say, 'Ah suttonly will,' and hang up the receiver.

"He came back to the bar and looked us both over thoughtfully. I perceived that he was trying to make up his mind about something that concerned us. If there was to be any favoritism I was willing to pay for it. So I invited the boss and my competitor as well to have a drink, and at that moment a real estate agent breezed into the party and was made welcome. I liked the fellow from the start. He seemed to believe in himself, and his business card added confirmation. It read, 'I'm Mosby of Memphis'—no initials, no local address. His

main business was selling farms, but the first step was the sale of gas machines to the farm owners. With each machine he gave without extra charge a sheet of printed directions telling how to set it up underground and how to pipe from it to distant points close to the surface the alluring odor of natural gas for the frenzied speculators to smell.

"The proprietor squared his obligation by placing another round before us in order that he might feel free to play fair. Then he said, 'Mah friends, thah's a big awdah waitin' for you-all at Phinizy's drug-sto' 'cross the rivah, an' he's jess bin a-tellin' me the fust one that gits thah gits it.'

"Here was indeed a problem. With all the boats by now out in the Gulf and the bridge gone, the quickest way across the St. Francis was by stage south fifteen miles to Park Place, then west by train ten miles to Marianna, then by another train north fifteen miles to Forrest City, and finally east to Madison. I suggested to my rival that only one of us make the trip and that we split the commission.

"While he hesitated Mosby dropped me a wink and I followed him outside. 'Brother,' he said, 'I reckon I can get you across in a jiffy. You don't need to split no commission with nobody. You can

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pay me \$25 if you use my idea and not a guldurned cent if you don't.'

"Of course, \$25 would be only a flea bite out of my commission on the big order that was clamoring to be filled; so I promptly agreed. Then I announced to my contender that I would not bother going all that distance to get an order which I might lose, and that if he got it he was welcome.

"As soon as he had hopped onto the stage, Mosby notified me that all was ready. He escorted me to the river bank where he had installed the mortar that the village used every Fourth to let the world know it was on the map. He had fed its capacious maw with a pound of gunpowder. Next he had coiled into it a stout fishline with a stub of old lead pipe attached to one end; the other end was tied to the axle. At every two feet along the line there was a baited tarpon hook. The gun was pointed high toward the opposite bank.

"All this I noted with curiosity; it meant nothing at all to me except that this man was wasting my valuable time. I was anxious to get to Madison but refrained from betraying my annoyance. Without bothering to explain, Mosby lit the fuse. "Boom!" went the squat thunderer and away went the pipe stub to the Madison side of the river. Trailing be-

hind, followed the baited line through the air in a parabolic curve as graceful as a swan's neck."

The narrator pauses, then digresses with a tone of apology and mental penance. He thumbs the coins in his vest pocket as though they were a rosary.

"No matter what the hotel man may have intended to tell us about the size of bass in the St. Francis River, he could not possibly have exaggerated. That day I learned my lesson to never again doubt a fish story, and I never have since questioned one for a moment. That was thirty years ago."

Picking up the thread of his yarn, he says:

"The line had no sooner stretched itself on the water than it became transformed into a huge, twisting, writhing, tumultuous cable of gigantic bass, strung from shore to shore! They raged at their captivity like ferocious lions, tugging this way and that, spending their enormous energy futilely like people in a panic. Mosby knew; he had this all figured out ahead. If instead, they had all of them rushed up or all rushed down the river in a body they would certainly have carried the mortar along with them like a pebble. The surface of the water below was covered with foam; it must have been

froth from their mouths, they were that frenzied. After a while they began to calm down. One by one each of the fish keeled over on its broad side and then came my realization that what I beheld was something more than a mere spectacle arranged for my entertainment.

"Mosby keenly observed that his idea had at last penetrated my dull brain.

"With a graceful sweep of both arms and a low bow with hat in hand, he said, 'Welcome, sir, to Madison.' Instead of paying him in bills I counted out twenty-five silver dollars to lighten my weight. Taking up my sample-case, I walked confidently across this pontoon bridge of bass without even wetting my shoes!"

"Wonderful! Marvelous! Stupendous!" shout the delighted grown-up children.

"By the way," inquires the student, "what held the lead pipe end of the line while you were crossing?"

"It caught in the crotch of a tree."

"Did you ever learn the fate of the other salesman?" asks the minister.

"No; not ultimately. God alone knows that. He grew suspicious because I did not leave town with him and came back to investigate. While looking

about for me he heard the explosion and hurried to the river in time to see me step safely onto the other shore.

"Idiot that he was, he started after me on a run. He ought to have known that the rhythmic impact would set the bridge vibrating and cause its utter destruction. Well, when the line broke he managed to get clear of the pontoons all right and I thought he was going to come through. I climbed up the bank where I could watch him better. He weighed about two hundred pounds and, swimming toward me in his linens, looked for all the world like a big yellow-back frog with all four legs going in a most irresistible manner.

"Just as I was on the point of turning around to beat him to the drugstore I was horrified beyond my power to move or cry out! I give you my word, gentlemen, one of those St. Francis River bass came up and scooped him right off the surface as neatly as you might skim a money-bubble from a cup of tea!"

"How much profit did you make from your sale to the druggist over the \$25 you paid Mosby," casually asks the certified public accountant from force of habit.

"I sold Col. Phinizy $\frac{1}{12}$ doz. bottles of ague bit-

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ters for \$1.13 less 50, 50 and 10. He also took a shine to a sample bottle of nerve tonic, so I gave it to him with my compliments.”

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During the foregoing recital one of the party who was forced to take an overflow perch on the edge of the veranda with his legs dangling off, has begun pacing back and forth noiselessly on the grass. This is the very man who is saving millions of smokers from nicotine poisoning. Modestly avoiding notoriety and honors, his whole life is secretly devoted to making synthetic tobacco from alfalfa and tonka-beans. He now comes to a stop and, under the benign influence of the radiant heavens, proves himself an unselfish benefactor to the guild of bass fishermen.

“You all know,” he declares, “that lakes which are near enough to reach for week-ends during the summer have little to offer nowadays except boating and bathing. The fish have become too darned wise. If ever one is caught by chance it is because it has lost an eye and can’t see the boat. So many of them were yanked out and then put back years ago through the demands of the law that the present generation has learned by instinct that a boat means a man and a man means

danger. Even the shadow of a boat will scare them away as far as they can get.

"I have a camp on just such a bass lake in the Adirondacks. Up to last year I used to fish as everybody else did and still does. Filled with hope in spite of absolute failure the day before, I would each morning scan both sky and water critically and, for no good reason at all other than a hunch, point the bow of my boat toward some far-distant place.

"My equipment included every kind of bait I could think of, most of which had been secured at great pains from a couple of hundred miles away. Being a veteran, I knew what a capricious fish the bass is. On the welcome arrival of my bait I carefully salvaged each precious morsel that had not passed away in transit.

"You men who fish for bass know just what it means to row from place to place only to find that the fish have gone elsewhere. On a seat which grows harder by the minute you simmer in the broiling sun by the hour and by the end of the day your back seems bent for life. In the silent company of what remains of your hellgrammites, crickets, frogs, worms, bass-bugs, minnows, grasshoppers, stoner bullheads and crawfish you return to camp tired and disappointed, swearing that you are through

forever. But after dinner and a rest it suddenly occurs to you that you forgot to take along lamper-eels! How odd you never thought of lamper-eels! With the keyed-up tension of a setter on a point, you are sure this is the one bait the bass are waiting for. An order by wire brings a fine supply in three days. Off you start again with the same old hope, ending with the same old result.

"Year after year my summers have been made up of these bitter experiences. Finally I concluded to try out my theory that the fish were there to be caught if not scared to death by a boat. The decision solved the whole problem, for the rest was easy. Ever since, I have been supplying fish to all my friends who have cottages around the lake. I am now known up there as the greatest bass fisherman on earth."

"Do you intend letting us into the secret?" cautiously asks the student.

"Of course," assures the speaker. "My place includes two points of land jutting into the lake, and an intervening cove. These two points are half a mile apart. Lined up between them is a long, rocky reef about six feet beneath the surface, an ideal feeding place for bass. I have a water-spaniel that has an appetite which would be worth a million

dollars if it were mine immanently instead of by proxy. He is always ready to eat. My first step was to train him to expect food whenever a white flag was waved. The flag was a sheet tied to a long, bamboo pole. I provided two of these. Next I rigged up a pair of traces to snap onto his collar and to these traces I attached a six-foot spreader, or you might call it a whiffletree, with three strong lines three feet apart. These lines were one hundred feet long and to each of them were suspended and weighted with small sinkers ten imitation minnows on swiveled lines, each two feet in length. These were applied to only the last fifty feet of the main lines, which left them five feet apart.

"Talk about a mine-sweeper! It proved to be a Golconda finder! My wife became so excited about it that she took entire charge of the camp terminal, while I went around by trail to the other point, taking with me a furled flag, a bag and a meaty bone. As soon as she saw me on the distant shore she snapped the traces into rings at either side of Nero's collar, straightened out the lines, and pointed me and my waving flag out to him.

"Into the water he leaped. He was a strong swimmer and was only mildly impeded by the constant shocks as the fish grabbed unengaged minnows.

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After all berths had been taken he pulled the load more steadily and brought it in without sweating a hair. I quickly unsnapped his collar, drew the thirty bass to the shore, bagged them and laid down in the shade while Nero finished his bone and dreamed of more food. When the faithful dog had rested sufficiently I snapped the sweeper to his collar, shouted to my expectant wife, who waved the flag and off he paddled for camp. I reached there with my load in time to take thirty more bass from the hooks."

"A rare piece of headwork," comments the attorney, "but it is my impression that the law does not permit two persons to take sixty bass in a day."

"True, but it says nothing about how many a dog may catch."

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Evidently the gray-haired stock-broker has something on his mind. He shifts uneasily in his seat and then gets up. He can think more readily on his feet. In that position he has no feeling of being under compression.

"I spent my entire boyhood," he begins, "on my father's farm in Connecticut. The growing season is pretty short up there in the Litchfield Hills and dad had a hard time to keep his little family in

food and clothes. I went barefoot every summer to save shoe leather. As I became old enough to go to school I also got big enough to help with chores. Still, we could not get ahead. I remember that mother was almost worried to death. Nothing had been paid against the mortgage and she realized that the dream of her life, sending me to college, must be abandoned. When the time came I went to high-school but had to walk five miles twice a day to do it.

"The winters there come early and stay late. One day while on my way to school through unbroken roads piled high with snow, goaded by our poverty to try to find a way out of it all, I formulated a plan which first paid off our mortgage and later put me through college."

There come expressions of sincere interest from some of the listeners. The moon, now fully risen, seems to lend a sympathetic ear to this recital of deprivation and hardship, finally to be overcome by what is now to be divulged.

"We had a fine brook on the farm and there were lots of trout in it in those days. By the end of the following summer I started my scheme working. First I put a barrel into our cellar safe from frost when winter came, and filled it with

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peat moss and sand. Then I dug thousands of angle-worms and dumped them into the barrel. They worked down through the moss and sand which I sprinkled with a quart of milk every day or so. This was food for the worms. Then I waited more anxiously than ever before for the first cold spell. Meanwhile I had been in correspondence with the swellest hotels in many different cities and found there would be no doubt about marketing my product.

"When the first tightening weather came in November I found, as I had expected, that the worms had grown strong and tough from the milk ration and moss scouring. With a big wad of them nestled against my leg in a pocket of my pants to keep them warm, I went down to the stream."

"Pants?" interrupts the pedant.

"Yes; we did not wear trousers in those days. One of the lusty worms I dropped onto the thin, transparent ice which was forming rapidly and, sure enough, a big trout immediately glued his nose so rigidly against the ice in the expectation that the worm would drop into his mouth that he soon became frozen in beyond his gills and could not have gotten loose if he had tried. Then I quickly disposed more worms every six inches over

an area two feet wide by four feet long. I observed with great satisfaction that beneath each of the thirty-two worms a good sized trout was gradually being preserved in all its natural beauty and for as long a time as the ice might be made to last."

"You did not have to inject ether through holes in the ice into their mouths to keep them still while they were being frozen?" the dentist inquires, adding mechanically, "Did it hurt?"

The speaker does not consider the questions relevant and therefore declines to answer. "By next morning the ice was eighteen inches thick. I then sawed out the block."

"Some weather!" comments the potato baron from Houlton, Maine.

"Yes, indeed. I never saw such a beautiful sight as that block of crystal ice with its precious cargo of speckled trout all headed the same way. They looked just as natural as life. Even the expression of eager interest was frozen on their faces.

"I had the cake already sold for a dollar a pound. It was to be used as a restaurant window display. Of course, I wanted to surprise mother and dad with my good fortune, so I had no help to lift it onto the bobsled and deliver it at the station for shipment. Within a few days I was overjoyed to

receive my first check. 'It was for exactly one hundred dollars and came from the Waldorf-Astoria. As soon as I got my plant well under way the money kept piling in on me from hotels and fancy restaurants all over the country. Just as fast as the trout-filled cakes were cut out others were formed in their places. Before spring arrived I had sold a hundred cakes at a dollar per pound, just ten thousand dollars altogether. This paid off the mortgage, bought mother an organ on which she learned to play "Home, Sweet Home" first of all, and there was plenty left to put me through college.

"It is perfectly wonderful what golden opportunities lie right at our feet if we only have the sense to pick them up."

"Very true," agrees the construction engineer, "but few of us are strong enough to lift a cake of ice two by four by one and one-half feet, which weighs six hundred and ninety pounds."

"Of course, you found out later that you got short-changed by five hundred and ninety dollars on each cake," observes the nimble-minded accountant.

"I believe you are right, now I come to think of it," concurs the unruffled broker.

YE GODS AND LITTLE FISHES

"Let's see; when was the Waldorf-Astoria built?" innocently muses the architect.

"Did I say the Waldorf-Astoria? Perhaps it was the old Astor House," suggests the story-teller helpfully. "Yes, of course it was. Isn't it getting a little cool out here? What do you say, boys? Shall we call it a day?"



PART SECOND





THE ROD

TO select a rod which, with proper care, will give utmost satisfaction from the day of its purchase throughout a troutman's life-time is possible; to describe fully how this may be done is impossible. Certain basic requirements may be stated in no uncertain terms. For instance, it had best be made of split bamboo, nine and one-half feet long, weighing between four and six ounces, and its bend under strain should begin imperceptibly just above the grip and increase uniformly with each inch up to the very tip. The first guide and the tip top should be agate lined or made of tungsten; the others may be of the snake type. Agate guides are wear-proof and will not abrade the line; the others have little cause for friction owing to their intermediate positions. Ring guides are wholly unfit; they have a provoking way of laying flat against the rod and hugging the line when wet. There are also refinements such as the hook ring and dull metal ferrules.

The one most important consideration, which no choice of words can be made to explain except

in a most uncertain manner, is the degree of pliability required. It must not be stiff, nor should it be limber. It must be resilient enough to respond with alacrity to the final wrist snap of the forward and rear casts; on the contrary, unless masterful under the tension of a big fish it is utterly worthless. When about to jump into the uncertain whirlpool of rod selection you may keep clear of the most dangerous rocks by silently repeating:

A rod too stiff will never do
To cast the fly both far and true.
A big trout and a willowy rod!
My only hope is trust in God.

Between these extremes the perfect rod awaits discovery. High price does not mean a good rod, but a good rod generally means a high price. Once found, it is worth all it costs.

Weight of reel has much to do with the proper rod balance, this being as essential to the faultless manipulation of fly as the perfectly balanced gun is to good marksmanship. Rod balance may be determined by attaching the filled reel to its seat, threading the line through the guides, tying eight feet of leader, looping this with about thirty feet of wet line over the tip and finally using the fore-

finger as a fulcrum at the upper end of the grip. The nearer this point of balance approaches the grip, the less tiring will be the manipulation. The rod when cast vertically ought to sway back and forth like a pendulum, the wrist supplying the impulse.

The weight depends mainly on the wrist and hand strength of its user. To prescribe a fixed weight for all would be equivalent to advising the round-shouldered hunter that he should not have his gun made with a "drop." Doubtless "Babe" Ruth would not have been able to compile his wonderful home run records if he had not used extra heavy bats suited to his great strength. One man will handle a six-ounce ten-foot rod with the same ease, accuracy and grace as a frail enthusiast with a whip half as light and two feet shorter. Even the latter combination, if the wielder be an adept, is sufficient to withstand the stress of the fiercest battle and emerge victorious.

The lighter the rod which will do its work properly, the less tiring it will be to the wrist. As many as several thousand casts are made in an average full day. This may at first appear incredible but you have only to verify it by counting your casts during an hour. Many a time my overworked right

wrist has ached like a rebellious tooth with an ulcer clinging to its apex, and a pain in the muscles of the palm has bored down into the metacarpal attached to my little finger. On such occasions my shirking left has been called into play. Invariably it starts with amazing awkwardness but after a few casts attains a real competitive stride, as though refuting my view that it should be used only as a makeshift. Ambidexterity with the rod is worth cultivating.

How strange it is that certain customs persist even when opposed by sound reason! Nature provides the pheasant with a dress which in the killing season most resembles the color of dead leaves; the tree-toad conceals itself by flattening its body against a trunk of similar tint. Indeed, much of our wild life is made to harmonize in hue with its environment, that it may outwit its enemies. Yet the rodmaker, otherwise so skilled, compels us, in so far as lies within his power, to notify the trout that we are coming. He seems as wedded to the idea of finishing all exposed metal parts in flashing nickel or silver as the little boy is to his first red wagon. Whenever we face the sun the reflected light is shot into the stream from glistening ferules, butt and perhaps from a nickelplated reel.

THE ROD

Rarely are these parts given a gun-metal finish. All should be made so, or in a dull green, which would be better still. Then with the fiber stained green the entire rod would blend perfectly with its surroundings and thereby reduce to a minimum the chance of detection by the wariest of all fish.

It is always interesting to know at once the length of a trout if larger than usual. Many years ago I adopted a simple expedient to supply this information. The fish is placed alongside the rod with the tail even with the end of butt. Its nose will be opposite the number of inches of its length. If you wish to avoid adding rule or tape to your impedimenta I suggest this plan. Twelve inches from base of butt scratch off the varnish down to the wood in a fine line extending around half the rod's circumference, using either a needle or sharp knife. In the center of this line clear a patch large enough for two small figures. With pen and ink write "12" in the space and ink the line at either side. Continue these markings every inch up the rod as far as you please. If a winding should be in the way, you may omit that number; there will be enough others for accurate estimate. Then cover all inking with two coats of thin spar varnish. The figures will continue to glisten long after you are

gone. The same thing may be accomplished by in-laying above the grip a narrow strip of ruled celluloid or by spacing the windings an inch apart for the first foot above the grip.

When putting a rod together the male part of each joint should be wiped with an oiled cloth or rubbed through your hair. If it holds fast when you try to take it apart place it behind your knees with the stubborn joint midway between them; grip the rod with each hand outside and against the knees; press legs apart. Unjointing is bound to follow. Never ask a companion to pull one part while you pull the other. Lots of fine rods have been wrenched to their ruin in this manner.

Through much assembling, taking apart and whipping, the ferrules lose their first snug fit. To temporarily restore a firm grip pending replacement with new parts, tap the open end of the female part very gently, making it slightly elliptical.

A rod that is being used from day to day need not be taken apart until homeward bound. It should never be leaned against anything overnight because of its tendency to receive a permanent bend. Provision is made in some of the best appointed fishing headquarters for laying the rods

upon a horizontal ledge built hand high around the walls of the main room. Even this position is detrimental because the swell of the grip is not in alignment with the rest of the rod. When stopping at a farmhouse or elsewhere among honest people, it has been my practice to drive a wire nail about ten feet high under protecting eaves of house or outbuilding and suspend my rod from this nail by passing the line over it, catching the hook either in the ring near the grip or in the reel seat. The suspended weight of the butt and reel aid in keeping the rod straight. Incidentally, the leader is as free from waves next morning as the shaft of a perfect arrow.

The end of the season is quite naturally attended by waned enthusiasm when it is not easy to bring oneself to a complete overhauling of the outfit. However, the rods should be treated to a coat of very thin waterproof elastic varnish to keep all atmospheric changes out of the wood; leaders and other gut should be drawn through a cloth soaked with glycerin; the interior of the fly-boxes should be sprinkled with camphor shavings.



FLIES—WET AND DRY

A FLY intended to be fished just beneath the surface is known as the “wet”; the one intended to float is called the “dry.” The wet fly is offered as a winged insect which has been drowned by ruffled water or as a wingless specimen of aquatic life. The dry fly is supposed to represent a winged insect afloat in a lifelike manner. To present the former in rough water and the latter on a placid pool is to render the illusion most real in each case. Therein lies greatest success.

Both flies are made in much the same patterns on similar hooks. The method of dressing and more particularly the upstanding arrangement of wings of the dry fly is an aid to its buoyancy. This, however, is of little use after it once becomes saturated. Two practices are followed to keep it from sinking. One is to whip it through the air by making several false casts before each true cast. This operation is wholly lacking in interest unless there are threatening branches reaching out ahead or astern to grab it through the connivance of a devilish zephyr. Then the only possible thrill available is

when you bet with yourself that you will succeed in drying it and laying it on the water again instead of seeing it flutter from a tree limb.

The other method is to immerse the fly in a prepared oil when first attached and frequently thereafter, or apply to wings and body a pasty compound. The floating element of each is paraffin. Repeated whipping frazzles the wings and it requires more and more nursing to keep it on top. Unless fishing a wide, open stream where there is ample space in a different plane for drying by false casts, instead of wigwagging signals directly over the fish you hope to fool when ready for the true cast, it is best to place your reliance upon one of the many "dry-fly" concoctions. However evanescent these all may be in their power, however dull may be the pastime of intermittent false casting, still "fishing dry" is well worth every effort that may be expended when the nature of the surface demands it.

There is also a dry fly made with a cork body, but most of the comparatively few specimens now on the market are crude. The idea is excellent and will prevail in time against all other types or methods. Last season I secured some very thin cork shavings, no thicker than tissue paper, and experimented

enough to learn that these may be wound about the shank of the hook so that when the fly alights the barb invariably points down, which means that the wings always take a natural upright position. To make the barbed end hang down there should be a trifle more cork on top of the shank than underneath. This makes the imitation rather hump-backed, though evidently not to its disadvantage as a lure. Trout are known to be extremely liberal in their ideas of shape as well as color of insect food. While I found some difficulty, with the hooks as made, in keeping the hump on the back instead of its turning into another position, this may be prevented by the shank being roughened before flies of this sort are tied. Incidentally the leanness of the belly developed a distinct advantage in that the point of the hook is much less obstructed than is the case with all the fat-bodied flies now obtainable. This cork-bodied fly is a true floater; it cannot be made to sink of itself even when soaked through and through. It will be possible to dispense with time and strength-wasting false casts and with all "dry-fly" preparations when cork-bodied flies are made with the same delicate skill that characterizes those of the established kinds.

The nicety of dry-fly fishing under competent

manipulation commands the admiration of even the most hardboiled fisherman. Often when on a stream with a friend I have given my own rod a rest that I might delight unhampered in watching the perfect grace of the backward curve of his line, its forward dart like an arrow, the gentle flutter of the winged mite to the precise spot chosen for it, the deliberate rise, the barb setting twitch and the thrilling contest of brain and dexterity on both sides, ending either by the vanquished trout being led into the submerged net or by its magnificent fight to freedom. Every element of this performance applies equally to fishing wet and dry, with this difference: the rise to the dry fly is definitely visible, whereas to the sunken lure it is usually invisible and is to be detected by only a raised pillow of water above the hidden body of the fish. Hence, and if for no other reason, the additional modicum of judgment required in properly timing the strike into an unseen trout will alone preserve to the wet method its exalted place above the aspersions of dry-fly purists.

The wet fly sinks perceptibly below the surface within the two seconds it is usually permitted to remain. Often in very swift water where the rippling surface destroys all visibility of it and of ac-

tion about it, a feeding trout will take it without the knowledge of the fisherman and will be hooked by the retrieve. On all other occasions the roll of water or the actual break is seen. It is obvious that to know what goes on under water with a submerged fly demands infinitely closer contact with the mysteries than to observe what happens to a fly which floats upon the surface. To set the barb at the proper second with rarely a miss will forever remain the final test of skill.

The wife of a farmer, at whose house I once put up while fishing his brook, informed us as we were seated at table that she had apple pie and cherry pie for dessert. Being asked which he would have, the farmer replied, "Both are good." That is my view of these much argued methods. So, brother anglers, when asked, "Do you fish wet or dry?" look you not down guiltily at your ugly wading shoes, but with the courage of your own conviction answer, "Both." There are times, and many of them, when to use a sunken fly would betray stupid ignorance. Visualize, for instance, a glide of smooth, deep water between two bowlders which hold the stream to a narrow channel. It flows like molten glass. There are no distorting ripples to confuse the wary trout which is stationed midstream

alert for food. Now at the end of a long line we place as deftly as may be an already wet fly a few feet upstream for the current to carry directly over the fish we believe to be waiting. He rises to inspect it against the contrasting sky and finds it a bedraggled thing for which the unruffled ceiling of his home and the equally calm surface of the stream ahead supply to his acute instinct no sufficient reason. Without further interest he drops to the bottom and the spurned sunken fly is withdrawn. Then, and even, after arousing in him a suspicious frame of mind, we attach a dry fly and cause it to fall as before. Being dry, it flutters to the calm surface in a most natural manner. The hanging weight of the barbed end, looking not unlike an impotent stinger, fortunately holds the wings upright similar to those of a real insect. "This is something like!" exclaims the hungry trout as he clamps it between his jaws. A timely twitch of the rod furnishes a climax for the opening act of a drama of thrills that stirs the most torpid soul.

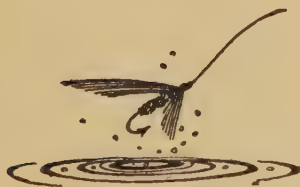
Conditions are totally different in broken water. The fly's battered and soaked appearance seems natural, on account of the waves, and it is taken greedily for a drowned insect. Much more rippling water than still water is to be found in every good

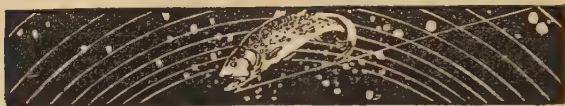
trout stream. When it comes to practical results the submerged parent may grant to its cocky fledgling a full twenty-five per cent handicap and still finish the season in the lead, both as to size and numbers.

The dry fly may easily be fished wet, but not the other way about to advantage. Hence, while one ought never be without flies of the dry pattern, it matters little whether the wet are omitted or not, except for the various hackles. These have no wings and are to be used as submerged lures only. The grays, browns and blacks are comprehensive imitations of the pupa, larva, shrimps and many other species of water life which form the chief food of trout. One never appreciates a hackle fly so much as when there is none remaining in its compartment. I recall a trip when I continued to use a brown hackle until the hook had become almost bare, and yet the fish still came for it as though it were an irresistible electrode. One of the most regretful of experiences with hackles was the loss of my last two Gray Palmers—gray hackles tipped with red wool. Having decided to experiment with them on the surface, I seated myself upon a rock in the stream and after treating them with paraffin placed them at my side to sun themselves. I

FLIES—WET AND DRY

named one Faith and the other Hope, such was the dependence I vested in them because I had no others of their brood. An hour or so after I had absentmindedly left them on the rock I trudged back downstream only to find that the breeze had helped itself. Of course, the fish would accept no other fly the remainder of the day. It is plain that even though you rarely offer more than a half dozen varieties you will take more fish by being equipped with a large assortment and plenty of each, for you will then devote a calm mind to fishing with your favorites instead of worrying about how much better you might have done if you had certain other kinds which you would not have used anyhow.





FAVORITE FLIES

OFTEN I have been asked which is my favorite fly. This question reminds me of a fond mother of four sons and daughters whom I once idly requested to name her favorite child. She replied, "I love them all." That is the way I feel about flies. While I gaze fondly at each of the many kinds which are entitled to berths in my box, I confess to a tender partiality for a few. Among these I may name without offense to the others the Female Beaverkill, Cahill, Alder, Hare's Ear and the Palmers, Brown and Gray.

How true it is that the fly which lures the most fish is the one to command our greatest respect! And yet, I have proved to my own satisfaction that effectiveness is due largely to opportunity. My experience has been that fish when hungry are not over-critical about color combinations. When they have been rising greedily to a Pink Lady I have deliberately replaced her regal highness by one as remotely different in toggery as Brown Hackle only to find the latter equally effective. Then, following a heavy shower which has resulted in a

FAVORITE FLIES

Bacchanalian feast of insects and juicy angleworms, the undisturbed excursions of the proud Pink Lady have made her appear so common and lacking in virtue that I have been tempted to call her a name reflecting no credit on her parentage. At such a time neither man-made flies nor even heavenly angel cake is more acceptable to a trout than a plate of corned-beef hash would be to you on top of an elaborate banquet.



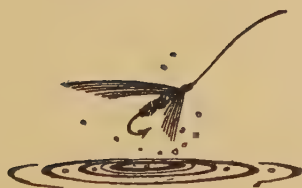


SIZE OF FLY

PRIDE in the taking of large trout increases as the size of fly diminishes. To win against a twelve-inch fish by the delicate bite of a No. 16 hook is as uplifting as a well mixed Martini. There are those who believe, and I am one of them, that the best sport awaits a choice of fly corresponding in size with the fish expected. This, however, need never be larger than No. 10. On the contrary, a few summers ago I met a very successful local fisherman—one whose creel filled my own with humiliation—who invariably uses No. 8 through sunshine and twilight, water high and low. With pools low and clear the midget size may alone effect a rise, but at its best it has little chance of picking up enough of a grip to withstand frantic rushes. Then one must yield line freely, ungrudgingly and prayerfully, for with a torn-out fly if you give more than the faintest strain, and with the probability of a fish lost otherwise if you don't, you are right between Scylla and Charybdis. In the wonderful event that you emerge victorious with

SIZE OF FLY

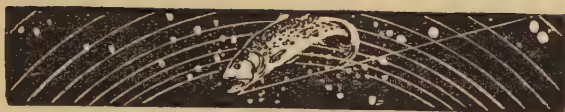
“the biggest fish the stream has yet produced” everybody in the region will soon know that you took it with a midget. Even your children and your children’s children will somehow learn of it.





NUMBER OF FLIES

SOME are content with one fly when making up a cast. Others do not feel satisfied without adding a dropper. The novice evidently believes that the more flies he has on the greater must be his catch, so he adds a third and regrets that there are no more loops, for he is of the men who buy their leaders ready-made. The best practice demands a single fly, though it is reasonable to attach a second temporarily while determining which seems to be preferred. The only other occasion for its adoption is when darkness obscures the tail fly. Then a light colored or gaudy dropper helps locate for you the tail fly upon which dependence is placed. The chief objection to more than one fly is that while a trout is being played, especially in a rooty pool, a second loose fly is quite apt to become snagged, permitting the fish to tear away.



LEADERS

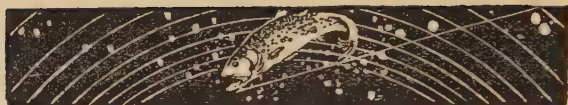
MATERIAL for making the best leaders comes in hanks containing one hundred strands eighteen or more inches long, of finely drawn gut of the silkworm. No space need be occupied here to describe the manner in which they are tied together in preparing the cast, for all this information is available in the catalogs of prominent dealers, together with illustrations of various excellent knots for attaching line and fly. The cast should be one foot or more shorter than the rod from grip to tip so that when bringing fish to within netting reach there will be no knot to possibly catch at the tip agate. Such a leader has much merit over the ready-made kind, not the least of which is that the maker, with material always on hand, may replace frayed joints from time to time. When on the stream a reserve leader with a few separate lengths for replacements ought always be coiled in an aluminum box between pads of wet felt. The main supply should be kept dry until needed. A leader should never be used until first thoroughly soaked. Being very brittle, it will

fray or break from very slight cause when dry. While standing hidden in brush on the bank of a brook one day I cast a dry leader onto the water for the purpose of soaking it, when an eagle-eyed trout darted from under the bank where I stood and snapped off with a flash the only Female Beaver-kill that I owned.

There appears to be a lot of nonsense talked among fishermen about the tapered leader and its superiority over one of the same diameter throughout. The object of a seven- or an eight-foot leader is that it may not be seen by the fish as plainly as the line. The finer a leader, the more invisible it is. To accomplish the least visibility it should be of equal fineness from end to end, not merely the last foot or so nearest the fly. A tapered leader cannot subvert the axiom that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. Any appreciable difference between laying upon the water a leader of uniform fineness and one tapered toward the fly end to a similar fineness is in favor of the former. Its fall is lighter and hence less alarming.

Is it possible to take as many trout with a coarse leader as with a fine one? Here follows an impressive answer to this much discussed question. Two experienced troutmen decided for the sake of com-

panionship to cover a stream together, each fishing alternate pools. One used large gut; the other, the finest. Both adopted a fly of the same size and pattern. The stream is one which flows into the East Branch of the Delaware; it averages about twenty feet wide and contains many fish of good size. The first pool fell to the heavy leader with no success; the gossamer leader took a thirteen-inch trout from the second; the third pool showed nothing; the fourth, another thirteen-inch fish; the fifth, nothing; the sixth, one of fifteen inches; the seventh, nothing; the eighth yielded one of fourteen and another of nine inches. By then the "ox-rope" had demonstrated its frightfulness beyond question. It now very fittingly rots in its aqueous grave somewhere between Shavertown and the Atlantic. This performance, which may be repeated with invariable certainty as to essentials, would seem to prove two things conclusively: that is, a fly attached to the finest and least visible leader will entice the most rises; if properly handled it will master big fish.



REELS AND ECONOMY

ECONOMY is sometimes practiced in giving to the church or to the poor without dire results to ourselves as far as we now know, but I am convinced that it should have no part in fishing. I have tried it numerous times and have found it always expensive.

Before the dawn of motor cars I reached my train destination on a fishing trip in a pelting rain and with no umbrella. The farmer at whose house I had arranged to stay was at the station to meet me with an open lumber wagon. We had six miles to go. As my light colored suit had to see me home again I stopped in at the village store and asked for an umbrella cheap enough to throw away. The proprietor brought forth the equivalent of a pup-tent draped about a sturdy wooden stick and asked me if fifty-nine cents would be too much. I replied that the price did not seem too high for such a heavy umbrella, and while I lifted it from the floor to prove that it could be done he volunteered that the color was fast, which clinched the trade. So, out I went into the storm under its ample protection and

climbed onto the springless seat beside my host. It was indeed a great comfort for us to see the dense downpour all about and to know that it could not reach us. That is, it did not reach us until it first had been filtered free from all its impurities, for instead of hitting us in great wads its force was broken into a refreshing spray, reminding one of a ride on the "Maid of the Mist" at Niagara Falls. Presently I observed through the atomized air that my companion's face had become strangely clouded, as though night had come. The road over which the tired horses slowly picked their way was not macadamized but it was at least a stone road. As the heavy wagon dropped down hill, bumping from ledge to ledge, the concussion produced upon the porous tympanum over our heads was so great that the spray became compressed into inky drops which soon made my delicate raiment look like a target after a shooting tournament. The streams pouring from unseen ribs in the rear striped the back of my coat with the contrast of a zebra's hide. Trickling down into the seat, the overflow formed a warm puddle and left the indelible imprint of a full moon suffering from a half-hearted eclipse.

The color of that fifty-nine-cent umbrella was the fastest I ever saw; otherwise it was a failure. A

cheap reel is even worse than a cheap umbrella or a cheap anything else which has to do with trout fishing.

All reels of automatic action, multiplying gears or crank handle balances are unfit for trouting. Utmost simplicity is to be desired; unnecessary projections are annoying. The most popular reel has vulcanized rubber side plates within which an aluminum spool is revolved by a handle set so close to a projecting flange that the line cannot be caught between these two parts. A ratchet prevents the line from running out at random. One objection to this type is that the flanges are chipped easily unless protected by metal bands; another is that its wide spindle demands constant vigilance in spooling to prevent jamming the line.

The guiding principle in buying a reel should be the same as in picking out a set of false teeth. The best cannot be too good. I have seen a line, caught by the balance at a crucial moment, result in a more voluble flow of harsh words than a misplaced huckleberry seed could have caused. The best of all reels comes to us from England. Its frame is black-finished aluminum alloy, about one inch wide and three inches in diameter. Instead of being solid, the spindle is made up of numerous small rods, which

insure ventilation of the line from within; they are set in circular form far enough from the axis so that even the inner end of the line is not wound in sharp coils. The narrow width insures against jamming. Its weight is five and one-half ounces, it carries fifty yards of "E" enameled line or the equivalent and it is of single action, as all trout reels ought to be. Another reel of the same general type is made in this country and sells for two dollars—about one-eighth the price of its English model.





LEG AND FOOT GEAR

DISAGREEABLE as it is, especially as summer advances, the vulcanized wading stocking is the thing to wear if you fear the result of wet legs and feet. It is clamped by the waist-belt and permits of wading crotch deep. For those who fish large streams like the Esopus and Beaverkill, wading pants strapped about the shoulders are more suitable. With the arrival of warm weather both are perspiring tortures. To wear either, a thick woolen sock is first put on to protect fabric as well as foot; then comes the wader; next another thicker woolen sock and finally a special shoe. By June 1, my waders are discarded except for inclement weather and from that time on I "wade wet." This outfit consists of khaki knickers, thick and long woolen stockings which reach above the knee, khaki leggings and either hobnailed or felt-soled shoes preferably of oil-soaked green leather, which with an annual dressing is always soft and pliable. It would be untrue to claim that the water of a trout stream even in mid-summer does not at first feel cold to the foot and

leg, but the sensation is gradual because of the intervening puttee and the stocking. There is no shock. After the body heat has once warmed the saturated stocking, the protection afforded by the shoe and legging allows of little change in the temperature thereafter. The feeling is pleasant rather than otherwise and makes fishing perfectly delightful on warm days which would be unbearable with waders. Unless one is a semi-invalid the plan involves no danger of taking cold if one keeps fairly active. On the contrary, "wading wet" may possess curative advantages not generally recognized by the medical fraternity.

From eating too heartily of farm-canned sausages and buckwheat cakes I found myself one morning in for a severe attack of tonsilitis. The farmer's wife mothered me with a vile solution for my ulcerated throat and slabs of salt pork steeped in turpentine for the glands of my neck, which was puffed out like a frog's when chanting "Jug o' rum." I grew worse fast. Before dawn next morning my friend came into my room and asked how I felt. I replied, "Old man, I expect to die to-day but I am going to do it on the stream."

So, abandoning the methods of modern science, I betook my fevered body to the stream and laved

with its pure waters those portions used in wading. I also laved the congested throat by frequently gargling a liquid product of a certain long-bearded grain. Some of it may have slipped down, for when I started fishing that morning it must be assumed that I was too ill to perfectly control the muscles of my throat. I grew better even faster by the wading-and-so-forth route than I had grown worse the day before. By noon I caught myself warbling like a bird. My tonsilitis was entirely gone but it must not be forgotten. The cure had been so quick and, withal, so enjoyable that the world, also, must benefit by it.

Soon after this occurrence I met the village doctor and decided to permit him to be the medium for disseminating knowledge of my discovery.

"Doctor," I began—for it is our unbreakable habit to start with that word any remark addressed to one who administers either castor oil or novocaine or religion or mad-dog serum or what-not—"Doctor, I have taken a special liking to you and I am going to start you on the road to fame by divulging to you the swiftest and surest cure on earth for tonsilitis."

"Tell me about it," he demanded skeptically.

"When you are called to the bedside of a patient," I said earnestly "with a badly ulcerated throat, inflamed tonsils, a neck puffed out like an adder's, severe pain in back and legs, and a raging fever, you have only to order the sufferer to wade a cold brook, meanwhile gargling faithfully with a distillation of fermented grain. Your name will soon become a household word."

"Did you do that?" he asked with awe.

I assured the doctor that such had been my recent experience and that he was very welcome indeed to the information. Instead of embracing me with gratitude he remarked compassionately, "There is no telling what a crazy trout fisherman will do."

Whenever there is a chill in the air wet legs and feet are a menace. How best to wade and keep dry would be a simple problem if weight of gear were not a consideration. Often it is necessary to walk a mile or so to or from the stream. Surely a light, comfortable outfit would be a great boon at the end of a hard day. The tackle stores offer us as their best an enormously thick-soled, heavy, clumsy, hob-nailed shoe which makes one walk after the manner of a Flemish peasant. Perhaps this with a

wet, thick woolen sock, a wader and another sock inside may not weigh as much as a ball and chain, but surely the latter can be no more uncomfortable. A sole of dense felt is an improvement upon leather in that it is lighter and requires no hobnails. With such a sole one may be as sure-footed as a Rocky Mountain goat. It is not ideal, however, because of its short life. Recently I sent a letter to each of the most extensive manufacturers of sporting shoes in the United States, something more than thirty, asking if they made a duck shoe laced to within an inch of the toe, and having a leather sole about one-quarter inch thick. It was my intention to have a felt sole of similar thickness sewed each year to the leather sole. Such a shoe would be as the wings of the morning compared with the brutal back-breaker we have at present and should sell profitably for half. Can you guess how many of these thirty-odd concerns make such a sporting shoe? Not one! But it may come yet, for a maker in the Middle West proved to be interested and promised to investigate the demand for just such a shoe for trout fishermen.

The rubber boot becomes the surest hip-breaker known as soon as it loses its original roughness of sole. The same slippery danger applies to crêpe rubber

LEG AND FOOT GEAR

soles when worn smooth against the rocks. With leather sole and hobnails it is safer, though a weighty, blister-breeding thing at best. A valet is needed to get it off if it fits; if not, a trained nurse is a better choice for fishing companion.





THE LINE

THE accuracy with which a fly may be placed depends much upon the weight of the line. It ought to be of sufficient density to make its way through calm air as directed—not a whit heavier, for the greater its weight the more disturbance it will create in striking the water. To master the biggest trout in the stream it need not be so strong that it cannot be broken by a straight pull between the hands. If it will suspend a dead weight of five pounds the fault of a lost fish cannot properly be laid to the line.

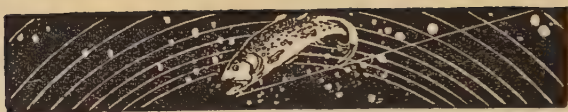
Many of the best fishermen prefer the "E" double tapered enameled line, which is perhaps more popular than any other; at least, for those who can afford to pay the price for one of the best make. My personal preference is for an undressed "F" silk line. It lies flat upon the water direct from the reel. Enameled lines coil more or less. The undressed line is much lighter until watersoaked, but the wetting gives it the required weight for accurate casting. It takes the paraffin preparation much

THE LINE

more readily than its smooth-skinned brother and therefore floats better.

Lines are made in browns, greens and various gaudy color combinations. They are all as conspicuous as a bride at a wedding, whereas they should be as unobtrusive as the groom. In my meanderings among tackle shops I have these many years watchfully waited for the appearance of one of either mist color or sky blue. It is the trout's point of view, not ours, which obviously must be considered. The nearer the approach to the prevailing hue of the sky, the less will be the contrast.





CREEL—HARNESS—LANDING-NET

WILLOW creels are so light that weight is not to be considered when determining the size to buy. It had best be large enough to admit of laying the fish at full length. As the catch rarely includes one of more than fifteen inches, the No. 3 is about right in size without being cumbersome. It actually occupies very little space in the kit for it may first be packed with shoes and socks.

The harness most commonly used has a strap which comes from the rear, is passed under the casting arm and snapped to a ring in front. This strap rides the chest in a most trying manner. When the creel becomes weighted with fish it prevents free breathing and interferes with the cast. There was a time when it was the only creel harness obtainable, but now there is to be found in every first-class tackle place an entirely different and altogether perfect arrangement. A wide belt webbing goes over the left shoulder, if one is right

handed, and another around the waist; both are adjustable. It leaves the chest and casting arm unhampered and holds the creel firmly to the left hip. Its inventor is a benefactor to the guild of anglers. Men have been knighted for less.

A net strung around a collapsible frame of flat spring steel screwed into a short ribbed handle and suspended by a strong rubber cord around the neck is inexpensive and quite satisfactory. It is light and easy to manipulate. The objections to it are its aptness at catching branches and then giving one a scary thump in the back; also that the cord soon loses its elasticity and becomes a nuisance. A frame which meets desire best of all is made of aluminum, jointed at the handle, where there is a brass catch. From the joint it is hung by a snap to a ring in the front of the coat, out of the way and yet right where one hand may quickly release it and joint it ready for service. The only superiority of this frame over the other is its joint, which makes possible a shorter carrying length by half. My first experience with the easy bending aluminum oval led me to reinforce it with a band of more rigid metal. If the maker of the first described implement would adopt a joint between frame and handle, thus dispensing with the rubber cord, the result

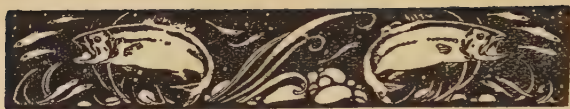
YE GODS AND LITTLE FISHES

would be ideal indeed. A net is usually combined with a staff for fishing strong water.

In landing a trout the only time that a net may be dispensed with is when its use is impossible. Such instances are very rare. Occasionally other than bait fishers are to be found without this very important adjunct. Last summer I watched a man drop his line over the upper side of a bridge and promptly begin a battle of strength with a big fish. He would not give an inch of line; the trout bent the rod double. As he could not make the rod do what he wanted it to do, he grabbed the line and started to pull the stalwart fish right out of the water. When his gang of flies came up to prove the crudeness of his work, I asked him if he had lost his landing net. He replied with ill humor that he would not be bothered with one of the darned things. There was a glaring signboard away up on the hillside along the main road. Without another word I pointed it out to him and went on my way. It appeared to fit his case precisely. He read, "Eventually! Why not now?" The following week I again ran upon him fishing from the same bridge and still with no landing net. At first I thought of confessing that I had already taken the big trout from there but finally decided not to destroy his

pleasure of anticipation, that being the chief result of fishing in such a fashion.

Sometimes branches which hang low over the water prevent bringing a fish within netting reach. Then your only hope is that he will not tear loose while being drawn carefully onto a gently sloping bank.



THE USEFUL AUTOMATIC

FOR all I know, it may be illegal to carry firearms excepting in the hunting season. To delve into the archives in search of a disagreeable law which, when found, must be obeyed is a menial business at best. I have studiously preferred to be ignorant on this subject, for I would not wish to have it on my conscience that I had deliberately broken a law.

To venture on a trouting expedition which brings one into the zone of bulls justifies taking all reasonable means for self-protection. Some men have a childlike faith in the harmless nature of these creatures. My experiences have taught me to indict each one with a desire for murder until he shall have proven himself innocent. I once thought to favor a brother fisherman by telling him to beware an ugly Guernsey in a certain pasturage through which the stream flowed. He looked with compassion upon me for being a rank coward and boasted that he would break the ribs of any animal that had the nerve to tackle him. A day or so later he tore his way to safety through a mercifully convenient barbed wire fence as this particular harem

ruler showed fierce resentment against the bold intruder.

A widow once pointed out to me the very spot in an Orange County barnyard where their docile, playful Holstein had suddenly turned upon her husband with the treachery of a tiger and had gored him to death. I have witnessed things committed by these devils too gruesome for description. As a class, I fear them beyond any other animal with which I have ever come in contact. The Jersey is the worst of all. One of that ugly breed, scenting me from afar, came crashing toward me through a dense screen of alders and gave me barely time to climb a tree. He was wild with rage at having lost his quarry; I was equally so after lowering myself to the ground an hour later and finding that he had affixed the imperishable stamp of his cloven hoof onto the middle joint of my rod.

My chosen means for ultimate defense against these creatures is an automatic pistol. It saved my life once without even being discharged. I then was wading a stream through a forest where no cattle were supposed to be when I heard the bellow of a bull not a hundred feet away. Bringing to mind that I had been told that a sturdy crack on the shin bone would produce a withering effect upon a vi-

cious animal, I began throwing rocks at the narrow targets in their slow advance, but failed to hit. Those which bounded off his head did not seem to bother him in the least. He came on with measured, appalling deliberation; his blood-chilling bellow and the ferocity with which he threw mud at his belly made me fear that my final moment was near at hand if my gun should fail me. The thought of the price of a dead bull flew through my mind. This one would without doubt prove to be the most valuable bull ever owned in that region when it became known that I had killed it. Still, how I then hoped to be fortunate enough to buy beef at the highest market price! Now he was twenty feet away; about close enough for the fatal rush. With my automatic quiveringly pointed as true as I could hold it midway between the blue steel glints of his enraged eyes, I said to him quite audibly and in a surprisingly even tone, "I think I've got to own you." He paused and looked at me with a new interest. He ceased to bellow. I continued to hold the aim as steadily on his star as a shaking hand would permit, intending to turn on a rain of bullets if he took another forward step, and trust to luck. Shortly he discovered, apparently by accident, right at his feet what may have been a new and

choice variety of herbage which absorbed his interest for the moment; then he noticed other things in the direction from which he had come and little by little meandered away. He evidently thought I was not afraid of him, whereas I actually was scared stiff.

Besides its power to impart false courage and moral suasion, this implement is useful against vermin. It is thought that more trout are exterminated by minks, water-snakes, muskrats, herons and kingfishers than are taken by fishermen. Most of these marauders are legally protected while pillaging to their hearts' content. One day I glanced at the pool next beyond and saw the head of what I took to be either a large snake or a small predatory animal leaving a wake across the surface as it made for the opposite shore. There was a plain duty which my automatic should perform in payment for being toted about. My rod was leaned carefully against a tree and a bullet was sped as straight to its mark as though directed by a sharpshooter. Of course, it had to go somewhere and just happened to obey the wish back of it, for I am a miserable shot. A muskrat lay quivering on a rock ledge at the bank and a fair sized trout was locked between its teeth.



ROD CASE

TO leave home for a trouting trip with only one rod is to court its annihilation. By taking two along nothing is likely to happen to either. Such are the odd workings of fate. I am rarely equipped with more than two; I would not think of starting off with only one. As my wife may never read this I am going to take the risk of divulging the fact that she does not care a bit for the rough country where trout streams play about through the mountains. She dotes on crowds, hotels and seashores. Strangely enough, under such circumstances, she is full of kindness and sympathy for every living creature. Her impartiality is perfectly wonderful. Her generosity with my personal things, my holiest of holies, is not the faintest shade less than with her own. It always had been in evidence but rarely to so poignant a degree as when she was once on a trouting expedition with me. I had gone down to the stream and by stumbling headlong over a log had broken beyond possible repair one of my two rods even before wetting a line. Returning to our stopping place for the re-

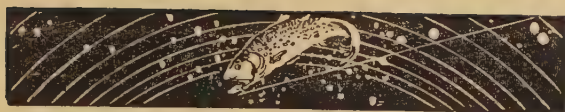
serve rod, I was dismayed to find it missing. I did, however, find my gentle wife much distressed because of an inopportune accident which had befallen a brother fisherman. It appears that while getting out of the stage his one and only rod had been crushed between the wheels. She had learned of his plight and had insisted upon his using mine, which she said he had accepted with great reluctance. After sitting about all day long with nothing on earth to do I came to understand for the first time why she does not enthuse about the back country.

A leather rod case is better than none at all, but it is by no means satisfactory. The life of a leather case exposed to the rigors of fishing expeditions is too short to permit one to grow fond of it. A fisherman learns to bestow great affection upon the parts of his accouterment which have served faithfully in all his campaigns. One of my most prized possessions is an old fishing coat with lacy filaments at the cuffs, patched lining and permanently soiled collar. If it should become my final shroud I know that my sleep will be the sweeter for it.

Some years ago my sole-leather rod case became wilted into shapelessness and so weak from age that it could no longer grip new stitching. I tried to

find one of a more suitable kind but failed. Then I conceived the idea of a case made from vulcanized fiber in telescope form, riveted along the lengthwise lap and at ends, the cap being secured by lock strap passed through metal guides. In the center of its length is a handle buckled through two riveted metal straps. Exclusive of the six-inch telescope cap, which may be made to add three or four more inches to the interior capacity, it is forty inches long, three inches in diameter and affords ample room for several uncased rods, reel and a small fly-box. It is of mahogany color, waterproof and wear-proof. Since then the fiber case has quite generally supplanted the leather one in stores where the best tackle is sold. It is made in several sizes and embodies various improvements on the one here described.





KIT AND CONTENTS

MANY of my friends gayly start off on trouting trips with a rod, creel and a moderate sized dress-suit case packed with all the other things they believe will be required. I dare say this is true of most piscatorial enthusiasts. It is very important indeed to eliminate even fractional ounces of unnecessary weight when to reach one's destination means wearisome carries. On such an expedition he who pares down his impedimenta to a most wisely chosen minimum and maintains utter indifference to the absence of creature comforts is a sportsman of the first rank. There is, however, a vast disparity between the outfit to be portaged through swamps and trackless forests and that which may be landed by motor car right at the door of fishing headquarters. In the latter case there is no excuse for the omission of anything which might reasonably be needed.

My kit was especially made to accommodate itself to any load up to the capacity of a small steamer trunk. The material is vulcanized fiber board pro-

tected by wrought iron corners and held together with three large straps, one with a lock. It has for ten years withstood the fiercest attacks of baggage handlers and, unless consumed by fire, promises to last forever. I have often watched these strong-armed autocrats lift it with a grunt and drop it from their cars with diabolic vengeance to the platform four feet below with no damage whatever unless to the platform. John Wanamaker may have deemed teaching a famous Sunday school his greatest life work, or perhaps he considered the post-master generalship his crowning glory, but to me his most imperishable act was the making of my fishing kit.

As frankness should be the corner-stone of every essay, I shall feel relieved to confess that my whole reliance in packing this kit rests upon what I might term a "fishing list." This mnemonic act may seem as unnecessary as the grotesque spelling of the word here used to describe it, but I would no sooner venture to pack without first posting my list on my chiffonier and checking off as things are stowed than I would dare wear a cane to business. Lots of people do both and still live but I just could not feel safe trying either. The man who spurns the thought of aiding his mem-

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ory is credited with rare foresight and those of us who must lean upon an artificial staff are inclined to feel deeply humiliated until—and “until” is as sure as death—until he comes into our room after unpacking and confides to us that he forgot to put in his fishing hat. The next day he feels as conscious on the stream with a decadent derby topping an otherwise correct costume as a blushing fiancée on being introduced to her prospective mother-in-law.

Before going away with a companion I asked him if he would like a copy of my list. In declining it he did not hesitate to impress upon me the statement, if not the fact, that he was still mentally competent. So when we reached our rendezvous far away in the wilds he was compelled for three days to fish without a landing net while awaiting one to be sent from the city. Of course, it was during this period that he lost a battle royal with the most enormous trout of his whole experience. Another friend, young, sane and normally alert, drove down from Canada to join me on another occasion. He reached the farmhouse late in the evening and then discovered that he had left his waders drying on a rack six hundred miles away. No, there is nothing to this memory

business when the joys of a fishing trip are at stake.

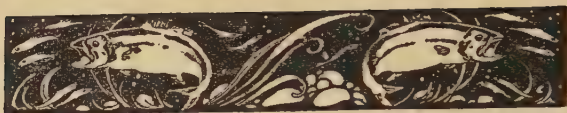
Perhaps it is because I have seen so many otherwise intelligent men start off unprepared only to cripple the equipment of their provident companions that I feel justified in urging all trout fishermen to pack from a carefully thought out list. Here is one which is the outgrowth of many trying experiences. It provides for all sorts of weather and mishaps. The whole is compacted within a space fifteen by fifteen by twenty-eight inches. One may feel properly prepared for a trip of from a few days to several months with two dependable rods and:

Landing net, waders, belt, fishing hat and coat, khaki trousers and puttees, corduroy suit, rubber cap with hood, thin and short rubber coat, paper vest and sheepskin vest, underclothes, flannel and other shirts, socks, handkerchiefs, collars and ties, pajamas and slippers, washcloth, comb and brushes, shaving outfit, pistol and cartridges, camera and films, tooth paste and brush, extra spectacles and books, tobacco, pipes, cleaners, pouch and matches, medicine case packed, stamped envelopes, paper and fountain pen, money and

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blank checks; creel containing two pairs of fishing shoes, woolen socks and long stockings; tackle box 5" x 6½" x 9½" containing compass, large and small fly-boxes with flies, leader box, hank of leader gut, two spooled reels and extra line, jack-knife, surgical scissors, 6 lb. spring scale, cylindrical oil-can filled, cork-screw, tweezers, black-headed steel pins, needle and thread, collapsible drinking cup, rubber patches and cement, waxed end, awl and coarse needle, hob-screws and tools, wax for lines, dry-fly preparation, potassium permanganate, razor blade and tourniquet, file, emery cloth, magnifying glass, ferrules and guides, mending wax, turkey or rooster quills for rod splints, adhesive tape, silk thread for windings.





FLY OR BAIT

IN having forsworn the use of worm and minnow I assume no monopoly of virtue. The transformation started with an incident; it later became engraved upon my conscience by perseverance and was followed by success beyond all former measure. Apart from the delicacy of the use of the fly, it is the only method that does not leave in its trail fish that are wounded beyond recovery. The fly rarely enters a part more vulnerable than the gristly tissues of the mouth and, if not captured, the fish is none the worse for its adventure.

If bait is offered by the experienced hand it is swallowed well down. Resorting to one of its manifold devices, the fish breaks the snell and wins its release only to die with the barb penetrating a vital member, usually the gills. In most States it is illegal to take trout less than six inches long. The bait user obeys the law in restoring undersized fish to the water but in his heart he knows that the poor creatures cannot live.

Whatever extreme views I may hold against fish-

ing for the most dainty and superbly beautiful of all game fish with bait at any time or under any circumstances, they are the views of one who has been steeped in the sin of it. I am familiar with all its inhuman depths. My message is quite unlike that of the cloistered saint who preaches against immorality without ever having been outside the sacred walls of his monastery since brought there as a child. In order that I may qualify as a former addict of the baited hook I shall here testify briefly.

Like most good resolutions, my conversion was induced by tense emotion based upon sudden conviction, easy to make and difficult to keep when cooled. Often an empty creel caused me to repent of my rashness. How much surer a good day's sport with a worm box strapped to my belt or a minnow can in my creel! But each time my faith flagged I had only to recall the incident to make me as firm as ever. It occurred on the Konkopot in the Berkshires twenty-five years ago. Down the stream I floated, dandled and sunk a worm-bedeked hook for a mile without capturing more than half a dozen small fish. Then just ahead of me there appeared a man casting a fly so prettily that I stepped aside to admire. As he landed a trout I approached him with the customary salutation,

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"What luck?" For reply he threw back the lid of his creel which, with the fish just taken, was filled to the brim. Then at my solicitation he delivered for my sole benefit a discourse of doubtless greater interest to me than would have been one of his sermons, for he proved to be rector of the Episcopal church at Great Barrington. Wherever he now may be, I would like him to know that through all the years that have passed since then I have never broken faith.

Prior to this I was enjoying an outing at Westport on Lake Champlain. The fishing for bass, perch and pike had begun to pall and I yearned for a day with trout. On making inquiry for a suitable stream I was told there was one about a mile away which used to have trout in it but that it had been fished out for years. If such was its general reputation it augured well; so off I started to find it. To one accustomed to tramping it is not difficult to tell within a very few hundred feet when he has covered a mile. With the step and cadence of war-time it requires a short twenty minutes. After following the indicated road a mile and seeing no marked depression of land ahead, I asked a passing native if there was a brook near by. He replied, "Yes, I reckon it's about a mile

ahead." I measured off another mile and still there was no stream in sight. The woman who came out of her house to watch me draw a bucket of water for a drink also reckoned that the stream I had been looking for was "about a mile" up the road. She told the truth, for there I found a little brooklet winding its way through brush, veritably alive with small trout. To toss a baited hook through that impenetrable tangle was impossible. Hence, several buckshot were bitten fast to the hook snell, the loop of which was reeled in to the tip of the rod. The rod was pushed through the labyrinth ahead of a crawling body until the tip was over the water. Next, by stripping a few inches of line from the reel, the baited hook was pulled to the surface by the weight of the shot. It had hardly reached the water before it was grabbed. Raising the tip was out of the question. The hook was therefore set by jerking the line. I then backed out of the brush on hands and knees with the fish. This operation was repeated many times with invariable success. It is often profitable to try a stream which has been "all fished out." Another method which I confess to having practiced when dense overgrowth made casting impossible was to place a baited hook upon an innocent looking chip

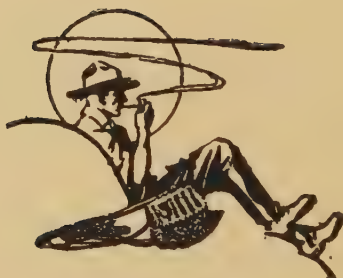
set afloat in the current and withdraw it from the chip at the desired spot.

Perhaps it is idle to discuss the relative catches of fly and bait. There are those who turn to the worm or minnow when the fly is not effective. If a fair catch results their backslide is thought to have been justified, whereas if they had continued with the fly success might have been equally great. Whenever trout are hungry they will accept properly presented food whether on the surface or beneath, quite irrespective of temperature of the weather. I have taken trout from the Neversink in a flurry of snow so dense as to partially obscure my fly. The prevailing opinion among those who fish, judging by observation, appears to be that the specious lure cannot be used successfully until flies are to be seen hovering over the stream. Is it not true that a trout of proper size to keep has lived through summers enough to know that the real fly is the daintiest food he has ever known? Must we in humiliation place this fish in the class of dumb-bells, or may we not dignify it with a faith in its instinct to remember and recognize at once the special brand of food which the season before tempted him and his bespangled brotherhood of Sybarites when nothing else would?

Whenever a sportsman wielding a fly fails to equal or excel the catch of a bait fisher, whether in April or June, the blame must fall upon him, not upon his lure. Opportunities to try this out are frequent for those interested. On a recent trip I was fortunate to find on the stream a most adept manipulator of bait. His methods were faultless. A "bite," which is so generally followed by an immediate jerk, meant to him that the fish was only mouthing the bait into position for swallowing; so he stripped a foot or two of line from the reel to release all strain; then in perhaps ten seconds, taking a feel and finding it satisfactory, he struck. Every "bite" meant to him a captured fish. "Here," I thought, "is a protagonist who may put my humble efforts to shame." As we sat on the bank discussing our respective theories it soon became evident from the pet name he frequently aimed contemptuously at my little Brown Palmer that there would be no trouble whatever in arranging a test. We then agreed to cover the same portion of the stream, he fishing down to a certain place where I was to begin and I fishing up to where we were then seated. When we again came together at the meeting place the fly had vindicated itself against the most skillful bait fisher-

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man I have ever seen. The best part of the incident is that it won a convert. As we parted company he said, "Hereafter if I can't take 'em with a fly I'll just leave 'em there."





UPSTREAM OR DOWN—THE HOOK

CONTRARY to the prevailing custom in England and Scotland, most of the anglers in our country fish downstream; a small minority fishes up. Nearly all of them use hooks with the one-way bend; the rest prefer the offset type. Herein lie differences of such radical importance as to justify thoughtful consideration. Both are fundamental questions and their fair solution will alone make possible the highest enjoyment of the sport by the greatest number.

Of course, it is a very simple matter to drop a fly onto the water and let the current toss it about downstream. Also it is obviously less tiring to wade with the flow than against it. The only possible advantage of the one-way-bend hook is that it is stronger. This, however, is worthy of no emphasis, for rarely does any fly hook break unless misused.

Let us now visualize a man fishing downstream with the single bend hook. He approaches a pool below him and casts his fly. A dozen ravenously hungry trout see him and all dart to cover with

fright. Awaiting food to come down with the current, they were all headed upstream and he was in the direct line of their vision. One fish lying close to the bank does not detect its enemy and rushes out for the fly which it takes headed upstream. His only chance of hooking is when twitching the fly away from the fish. The mouth of a trout becomes almost a straight line when shut and it is parallel with this line that the flat hook is turned when clamped unless entirely within the mouth, which is exceptional. The jerk of the rod is therefore almost sure to draw it through this slot unless the barb chances to be back of either side of the mouth.

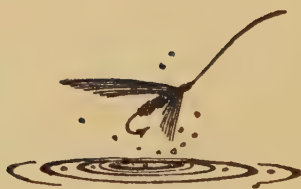
On the other hand, you are fishing upstream with an offset hook, one with the two-way bend. You approach this pool from below while the trout are intently watching for food from the opposite direction. You are not visible to them unless they are turned by your lack of caution. Every fish is your possible captive. The fly is taken. The rod is twitched perforce toward the trout, not away from it. Because of the two-way bend the hook cannot be clamped flat. The point is bound to take hold if even a thirty-second of an inch within the rims of the mouth, above, below or at either side.

My observation is that of two equally skilled troutmen, both using hooks with the single bend and fishing a brook of from ten to thirty feet wide, the one wading up will average double the catch of the one fishing down. Now if the former alone adopts the offset hook his comparative success will be still more remarkable. The difference in results between up and down is not so great on a very wide stream for reasons which are self-evident. Much of the fishing in each case is done across the current.

A fish is as deaf to sounds out of water as a human diver. You may creep cautiously to the edge of a bank and shout yourself hoarse at a trout which you can see a few feet away through a screen of bushes and it will remain ignorant of your presence unless it catches a glimpse of you through its school-teacher eyes. Next crawl back out of sight, stamp upon the earth and return warily on all fours to note the effect. The trout has disappeared! When fish stop rising during a thunderstorm it is because they are scared by the flashes of lightning or by the thunderous tremors of the earth, or both. A noise made in the water, such as the grating of hobnailed shoes on rocks or an awkward splash, will, on the other hand, send

the fish skurrying to safety. Submerged sounds diminish against the current; hence less tiresome caution need be exercised in fishing up than downstream.

An exposition of the practical results between fishing a trout stream up and fishing it down does not take into consideration that the former method invites and even demands a nicety of manipulation of the fly such as must remain a closed book to him who fishes with the current.





BEST TO START RIGHT

LEST one mistake a very crude performance for a high degree of skill because of having taken daily the legal limit from a brawling mountain brook, hidden from most men in an isolated wilderness, it might be well to pause and reflect that this success may have been due to a plethora of unsophisticated fish rather than to expert manipulation. The size of catch is not always the measure of one's proficiency.

Once upon a time I was a member of our town volunteer fire department. Shouldering up against us were two other towns. Many of our fire alarm numbers were duplicated by both neighboring places and it was quite difficult for us to distinguish our fire-bell from theirs. So at a meeting of the Hose Company I was delegated to attend the next meeting of the Hook and Ladder Company and to obtain their joint approval of a substitution of numbers which would avoid conflict. The nodding heads indicated a general acceptance of the plan, but when I had finished speaking the boss of that branch of the service arose deliberately and

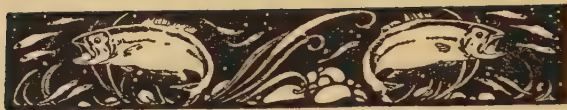
said, "Thot is ahl vurra well and no wan wud loike to see th' change better'n meself, but it has took us tin year to learn thim numbers and it's too late now fur us to unlearn 'em." His words were impressive and the numbers were never changed. Unless a start is made under proper guidance one is likely to absorb a lot of misinformation which may be difficult to forget when once fixed by habit.

This came forcibly to my attention in the case of a friend who had found catching trout so tame where he formerly lived in Colorado that after coming East the thought of going fishing never caused him an extra pulse beat. In the virgin waters of his boyhood environment the fish jumped ravenously even at beechnuts as they fell from overhanging trees. His love for the woods, however, finally induced him to accept my invitation to try one of our Eastern streams. It did not take him long to realize that whatever he had learned about trout fishing must be discarded. He quickly saw that with his careless downstream slap he was a most conspicuous failure, especially as it became evident to him that the anglers assembled there were highly proficient. For him there was not a fish in the stream; for them the heavy creels

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proved otherwise. Right then began an awakened interest which has since become so enslaving that throughout each season he is constantly at his wit's end for enough reasonable alibis to justify his neglect of business.





CASTING THE FLY

WHETHER it be golf, surgery, pugilism or fly-casting, he who is fortunate enough to reach the top of the ladder is honored by the applause of multitudes. In fly-casting, however, if one falls far short of the distance record he may at least reasonably hope to take more fish than the wearer of the medal. In other words, the long fly is for show, not for trout. A natural fall of the feathered hook fifty feet away is all one need ever seek to attain. Longer than that means decreased control and fewer fish. The strike cannot be as timely or as delicately applied. Most fish are taken at between twenty-five and forty feet. This statement, of course, ignores downstream fishing wherein a cast of one hundred feet or more would not be too far to prevent the operator being seen under usual conditions.

That method of casting is best which admits of the greatest accuracy, length, grace and achievement. There are many different styles of casting but they may all be placed in two subdivisions, overhead and side. The former with variations is

CASTING THE FLY

used on streams free from interfering branches; the latter on small brooks overhung with trees. While there are excellent casts made by a few who employ the entire arm and hold the wrist perfectly rigid, this method is objectionable because of its lack of grace and especially on account of the exhausting shock or vibration imparted to the upper part of the body in halting the rod sharply at the point of its greatest impetus. Too strong emphasis cannot be placed upon the advantage of denying the shoulder and upper arm any share in the action. The wrist is used to impart impulse at the end of both casts, the forward and backward. In effect this is not unlike the wrist action in some of the golf strokes. The grip is firm, with thumb extended along the top for accuracy and to aid the wrist in imparting power at the right time. If you are one of those who move the entire arm, especially when attempting a long cast, you have only to strap the arm just above the elbow close to your body to see how much further the fly will then travel. Holding the upper arm rigid induces one to put a snap into the wrist. It is this snap which does the trick.

The line is first extended by the current in the rear and, being not more than twenty feet long

at beginning, is lifted from the water when you turn face upstream and raise the tip about thirty degrees behind the perpendicular. The forward cast, started deliberately, is increased in speed until the rod inclines at a forward angle of forty-five degrees, when the wrist snap and thumb pressure give the final punch to the line. This phase of the action ends with the rod pointed slightly above the horizontal. Now the lengthening of the line begins by drawing from the reel with the other hand two or three feet, which is pulled through the guides at the start of the back cast by the friction of the line on the water. More line is paid out with each withdrawal until the desired length is free. The forward cast should be deferred until the line shall have been completely extended in the rear. This saves the delicate fly from being treated like a whip-cracker and results in greater carrying power.

Do not cast at the spot where you wish the fly to drop but rather at a place in the air two feet above it, meaning perpendicularly above, so that it will fall leisurely where desired. If cast accurately to the spot it will slap the water in an unnatural manner and the trout will be scared instead of attracted by it.

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Meanwhile the hand not used for casting is by no means idle. Between its thumb and first finger the line is held level with the breast and at a side angle of about sixty degrees. By pushing this hand forward toward the plane of the rod much aid may be given the fly in alighting properly if the cast has been too powerful; or by dropping it low to the side excess line is quickly taken up if the cast has been too weak. The latter movement is also desirable when making the recovery; it effects a saving of several feet of line to the rear with its correspondingly lessened chance of finding trouble in that unseen region.

The start of the retrieve should be made with caution, for when fishing "wet" a trout may at that instant have taken the sunken fly surreptitiously. If so, violence may result in its loss and perhaps of the leader also. Increase the impulse to an imaginary point directly overhead; then give to the rod a quick snap of the wrist and stop it suddenly with the thumb. Do not be afraid of the rod; it will not break from this action if worthy of its job. The fly should not be permitted to touch the water in the rear after beginning the first cast and not even then if you are fishing "dry." The allowance of time between starting the cast and

the retrieve is about four seconds for a forty-foot line; more for a longer one and less for a shorter one. When fishing "wet" allow the fly to remain on the water about two seconds—ample to be taken but not long enough for critical examination, which more often than otherwise would invite refusal. The round trip of the fly including the stop on the water occupies about six seconds. It will soon become automatic if begun by a counting of seconds. When fishing "dry" the fly may remain as long as it continues to float naturally and where desired, free from the appearance of being dragged.

If a breeze blows from the right shift the plane of the forward cast a trifle to the right; if from the left, shift it to the left. If gusty from front or rear keep the forward and backward paths of the line separate on either side of vertical. These changes are made to lessen the risk of the line being fouled by the rod or the body.

Many fishermen avoid overgrown brooks and difficult parts of otherwise open streams. Such unfrequented waters are often most prolific. Side casting, which is adopted in such places, is therefore worth learning. It is made with the upper arm close to the body as in the overhead cast but the

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arc of the forearm movement is parallel with the water. Casting is done from one side of the stream instead of from the center, so as to take advantage of all space available for the swing of the rod. The fingered portion of the hand is upward when the rod is gripped. The line travels on a horizontal plane fore and aft close to the water. With this cast it is possible to avoid branches that hang to within two feet from the surface even if the objective point be as far as fifty feet distant. This is done either by lowering the arc of the tip or by dropping upon one knee into the stream.





EXECUTION OF THE STRIKE

IT is quite as difficult to tell how to properly time the strike as to describe how mother used to invariably make the best strawberry short-cakes any boy ever ate. Just when to stop working the dough could only be determined by the "feel." So it is with the strike. No infallible rule may be made that the strike should instantly follow a break of the surface, for a nose pointed upstream and perhaps from thirty to fifty feet distant is as likely as not to then be plowing toward the fly a foot away. Intuition and even prescience, both priceless rewards of observation and application, become in time more effective than any set formula. The surest plan, barring occult guidance, is to strike with the break, keeping in mind that there is an indefinite lapse of time before action, started by the wrist, can reach the fly. Another significant truth is that while the feathered masterpiece is to the eye of *fontinalis* a dainty bit of confection fit to be eagerly devoured, it is recognized instantly as a despicable counterfeit as soon as the unresisting metal is felt in the mouth. Out

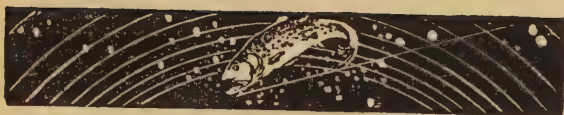
EXECUTION OF THE STRIKE

it goes as quickly as one would eject an April-fool bonbon filled with red pepper.

I recall two extremes. One was a novice whose flies were being attacked by a school of young trout. He did not strike at all because, as he explained to me, he was "waiting for them to eat it." Like growing boys, these youngsters have voracious appetites. Their desire to eat early and late reminds me of a six-foot lanky nephew of seventeen who lived with us while attending school. The appetite of my own youth had evidently been passed on to him. It had even increased, for it now attacked the contents of the refrigerator every night and seemed unsatisfied with less than half a dozen cold boiled potatoes with which to tamp down all that had gone before. The other extreme case was the taking of twelve consecutive rises without a miss. Such an exhibition of prowess is rare. It is, however, possible in upstream fishing with the double-bend hook while the sun comes from the rear so there is ample light and no glare to prevent seeing clearly into the water.

Execution of the strike consists of a snappy backward movement of the hand from the wrist. Too little power is better than too much. If only

the point of the hook engages, it is almost certain to be followed by the barb in the ensuing struggle. The temptation to strike a big fish harder than a small one is natural, whereas the reverse is less disastrous. There is a decided yield to a little six-inch fish whereas one a foot or more long is so bulky that a powerful strike into it is likely to tear off the fly or part the leader. Many a trout, with a hook-impaled minnow or worm so far down its gullet that escape would have been impossible anyhow, has been yanked ignominiously into eternity by quite unnecessary displays of strength. The lightly engaged fly, even in most profane hands, is rarely to be forced into committing such an indignity. Fish that appear to fly are not confined to the ocean. Just ahead of me, when wading a woodland brook, I once distinctly saw a fish fly from the water high into the air and disappear. The phenomenon gave me a nervous feeling about my condition but I was soon assured that I was all right. The ground presently shook from the thud of a bait operator as he fell from the limb of a tree while climbing it with hands and feet like a bear to rescue his trout from its aerial habitat.



A TYPICAL EXPERIENCE

AN infinity of details, constantly varying with conditions which may change with the speed of lightning, bestrew the pathway between fly-casting and a mastery of the whole game. The fundamental principles may be learned in a few hours; to transform them into a finished art requires many years of devotion. Let us note each detail of a typical experience.

Standing in the stream below the foot of a pool, your fly has carefully searched along the undercut banks and close to all large rocks in the bed throughout its length of thirty feet without bringing forth any sign of life. Now, stripping from the reel three left-arm downward swings of line and holding all in leash for the forward cast, your No. 12 Ginger Quill shoots ten feet farther than before and drops gently close by the stump which heads the pool. In a flash it is gone; a twitch and the barb is set. You assume now, as always, that the fish is lightly hooked. The wasplike sting of the strange insect at his gristly mouth is most unusual. He catapults into the air to shake it off.

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Yes, he is all of fifteen inches long. You note this as you first lower the rod tip to give slack line against the weight of his body or the possible swing of his tail, then elevate it to forty-five degrees to renew the tension the instant he strikes the water. In his amazement he rushes downstream to learn the cause of the trouble. On getting sight of your monstrous form he will probably rush back upstream, where you prefer that he remain, but if he should threaten to pass you his plans will be altered by your leg demonstration in the water if the stream be not wider than about twenty-five feet.

The line is held against the grip under the second, third and fourth fingers; the first finger is always underneath the line to keep it away from the rod where it may be quickly picked up by the other hand. On his way toward you the line has been stripped into the current below where it remains out of the way, free from kinks or snarls. The reel is to be ignored at such a time as though it did not exist except that its drag is set. It gives more line only as wanted. The captive has now recognized his hated antagonist and in a frenzy he rushes back upstream to gain his lair beneath the stump. He earns every foot of line allowed by the

pressure exerted against it between the thumb and forefinger of the other hand. How much surer is your feel and response than is possible from a metal reel! If allowed to take a hitch around one of these roots he will surely rub the hook out of his mouth or, by plunging after snagging the leader, tear himself free. He must be snubbed. All of the line has been retrieved from the current before it seems necessary to apply more pressure. Your judgment alone must determine the strain that will do the work without snapping the delicate gossamer or releasing the tiny barb. He is turned at last! A trifle tired by his great exertions, he is brought slowly down where he can take another look at you. The sight naturally throws him into unseemly rage and back upstream he bolts, tugging each inch of the line. He is playing your game, for the swifter the battle the sooner it will be won. By whom? Let us wait and see the finish.

His surgings fall short of the stump this time and now he sulks in deep mid-channel. More properly speaking, he is boring his nose against stones in the bottom, hoping in this deliberate way to dislodge the persistent, damnable insect which annoys him unmercifully but hurts only his pride. This chugging must be stopped; it is not fati-

guing enough. At your feet is a stone of hand size. You mark the seconds by tapping it against the rod butt below the grip. The intermittent messages of discomfort go quivering down the tense line and knock out of his head all other ideas than those of rebellion. Up he rises from the depths straight into the air. He shakes his head like a hound with a cankered ear, spending his energy with desired prodigality. Again you draw him downstream and still again he struggles back toward his refuge, drawing the line through its highly sensitized and grudging guardians. You realize, however, with utmost satisfaction that he has lost much of his pep, for so have you too. That rod wrist is positively numb with fatigue. A sharp pain is gimleting its way through the heel of your palm. "Will he never give up?" you wonder. Meanwhile, harassed by constraint unbearable, he is ready to declare in his native tongue, "This is a hell of a pickle I'm in." Half a dozen, yes a dozen times, the trip up and down stream is repeated until he careens on one side. With a chant of victory trying to shape itself ready for expression you draw him slowly toward you head first. The line is stripped so that the portion in play is, including the leader, one foot longer than the rod. It is now

A TYPICAL EXPERIENCE

transferred to the thumb and forefinger of the rod hand to be alert for a possible final dash; the other fingers of this hand grasp the butt. The disengaged hand submerges the landing net where he must float into it. Life's sweetest moment has arrived! No? What is the matter? Surely he cannot have escaped! And yet, there he goes, unsteadily but without restraint, dazed but victorious, back to his blessed home under the old stump from which you may be sure that, like knights of old, he will again fare forth some day to engage in honorable contest with you or some other worthy foe-man.

What in the world was it that went wrong? Let us consider. It appears that when you had him almost within netting range he sized you up once more; then summoned together all the remnants of his strength for his final break for liberty. Instead of permitting him to drag line from between thumb and forefinger you thoughtlessly gripped it tight to hold your conquered hero and the gristle of his jaw, worn to a shred, gave way under just that one more strain.

With all odds against him he maintained the glorious traditions of his race. He won by sheer grit which ends only with death. You lost by

YE GODS AND LITTLE FISHES

thinking more of the net than of the tension on your rod. Of course, it was a hard lesson and will need no repetition. It has been branded into your experience so deeply that it will never be forgotten. Now as you sit there on the bank with your pipe and perhaps a wee nip bringing gifts of consolation and philosophy you gaze down into the very throne room of your master and say, not to yourself like one ashamed, but openly and from your heart, "My respects and congratulations to you." This you do because you are a true sportsman and, therefore, a good loser.





FISHING DIFFICULT WATERS

HOW often are the likeliest pools guarded by limbs reaching out from all directions to grab like animate things the featherweight fly! They completely drape the inner shrine from which the monarch reigns; they hover directly overhead; they edge close to the water on either side while from the banks there shoot up luxuriant growths to meet them. A conspiracy between the powers of hell for the annoyance of anglers is obvious. To take the one best trout from such a sequestered pool means high achievement.

Many a time when fishing with one of my friends, who casts the prettiest fly I have ever beheld, have I lingered far behind to watch its flight without his knowledge. Much of his youth had been spent on one of the big streams of the Catskills and later in life the streams that had been touched by his magic wand were all of equally open water which presented no more obstacles than a golf course minus traps, bunkers and hazards. His overhead cast had been developed into

a masterpiece. One summer I persuaded him to join me on a trip to one of my favorite streams. It averages fifteen feet wide and either flows through woodland or is bordered by woods on one side or the other for about five miles. Some of the most productive pools are in the densely wooded portion. We were fishing together and yet separated by the lapping plan. It was such a pool as described above that I saw him approach. Unconscious of my presence, he came to a stop fifty feet below a rolling chug into a black hole alongside a huge boulder. With the unerring instinct of a well trained pointer, he recognized at once the spot where his quarry lay. Next he surveyed every branch of every tree roundabout and, emitting a grunt of disapproval, quietly waded ten feet upstream. It puzzled me to know how his upright cast could be operated under such conditions and it evidently also had him guessing. He saw nothing but trouble everywhere.

Beginning with a very short line he watchfully lengthened it with each cast until the fly reached the lower network suspended over the desired spot. A divine providence must be guiding his hook, I thought, for with each flight fore and aft it seemed endowed with more than human intelligence. How

it escaped the myriad of snares I could not understand! The overhead cast was accomplishing the impossible! When lo! There it hung limp and useless in a beech forty feet downstream. My friend is a church deacon and therefore could not swear. Had he been younger he might have hung his weight onto the limb and brought his tethered fly within reach. Instead of that he caught the line at the tip of the rod into the bend of the hook and pulled it away from the parted leader.

Rigging up afresh he started casting again, but his energies proved only his devotion to a forlorn hope. The fly must go under ten feet of branches which hung two feet above the water. Twice it caught lightly on these branches and each time was flicked off with a snappy up and down motion of the rod. The third time it wound about a twig and then looped back around the leader itself—a grip beyond the power of human ingenuity to loosen without breaking something. Seeing that he was tied fast, I advanced from seclusion and had the audacity to suggest that he tear away, rig up again and “shoot it up under.” Advice to one who gave me many of my first lessons in fly-casting did seem rather out of place. Still I had fished that pool many times and was familiar with its exac-

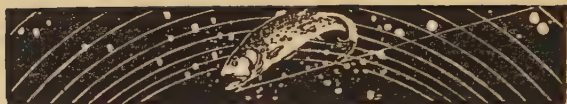
tions and its rewards. It was worthy of being fished right.

"Shoot it up under!" He fairly boiled. His face was scarlet from misspent energies. "Let's see you do it," he challenged. Not at all sure in the presence of my irate teacher, I backed against the left bank and rested my weight upon my right knee in the brook. The surface of the stream was a few inches below my hip. A reassuring survey told me that there was nothing to interfere as long as the fly was kept over the water. Much to my embarrassment, however, in lengthening the line to within a few feet of its goal the fly caught some vegetation hanging over the bank behind me. As it declined to let go by being flicked, I propped up my rod and went back to release it. What had snagged me was only a little bush with timid, heart-shaped leaves and an innocent look. To avoid the possibility of a recurrence I grasped it firmly, intending to destroy it, when a thousand pains shot up my arm. I had gripped a mass of nettles! There are advantages in not being a deacon, warden or vestryman. I believe I swore in a most profound and satisfactory manner. At least, my friend seemed pleased. He further tendered to me a sympathy as sincere as that of the golf champion when

his final opponent has missed the crucial put.

To further stress this point of not passing by difficult parts of a stream, on the Dyberry in Wayne County, Pa., there is or at least once was a sharp elbow made by the brook going under a fence and immediately returning to the same side. When a fisherman of my acquaintance with whom I had been discussing this matter came upon it he decided that mounting the fence twice was hardly justified by the fifty-foot strip, but on second thought it occurred to him that every one else had probably felt the same way about it. So over the fence he went and before quitting the elbow hole, evidently spurned by others, he took from it a dozen natives which, from their uniform size, might all have been cast in a ten-inch mold.





EVENING FISHING

THE recklessness of youth is no longer mentioned in my inventory. This may be one of the reasons why I now prefer the comforts of a farmhouse and wholesome food of varied character rather than the rough camp life which those of fewer years may enjoy without hardship. My breakfast and evening meal are rarely permitted to be interfered with by the call of the stream. On the other hand, my luncheon first goes into my creel, from which it may be later crowded out and into a capacious pocket of my coat only to be forgotten. This makes a day long enough for any reasonable desire; fishing, loafing, reading and reveling in the companionship of nature fill it to overflowing with sweet content. The poet asks, "What is so rare as a day in June?" and there is no answer. It is much too beautiful just as it comes to us for its start to be profanely advanced or its finish prolonged for the sake of a larger catch.

Later in summer when the sun grows hot and the water low, the stream will offer better sport at dawn and twilight. Then in the evenings of

EVENING FISHING

these hot summer days the winged insects shake off their filmy envelopes and flutter from the water, possibly hoping to make their escape under cover of the darkness. Their duller instincts are, however, no match for the ever wary trout. The flight no sooner begins than the stream seems alive with fish snatching their natural prey out of the air.

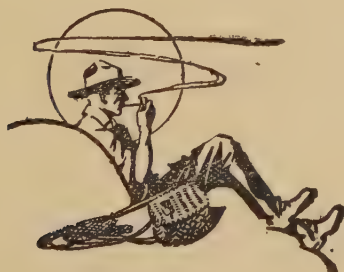
Whether any of these ravenous fish will accept your lure is doubtful, but, nevertheless, there is a thrill of expectancy in every moment of the rise. It may start in a twinkling and end as suddenly as it began. When all is over you have the recollection of an impressive spectacle, if nothing else. Here is the unfortunate status of the matter.

On the previous evening you have managed to capture one of these flies in the meshes of your watersoaked net. Luckily, in your box you find an artificial replica of it on a midge hook. So, as the dusk begins to gather, you hie to the likeliest place and await the expected rise. Here it comes like a flash. Your feathered fly is placed right in the midst of hundreds of real ones. Let us say there are ten trout jumping at that particular spot and that there are one hundred flies fluttering immediately above to gain freedom. Plainly there is not more than a one to ten chance of your offering being

accepted. You cast and cast and cast into the head of the rift where among the phalanx of gleaming bodies you detect by the light of the rising moon one great, salmon-bellied beauty which makes your little midget appear quite absurd. Of course, it is spurned. The shades of evening are being pulled with unkind speed; you mentally remonstrate without effect. Another fly must be placed before him at once. With flashlight under one arm and rod under the other you snip off the impotent fly and by a miracle succeed in threading the tippet through a No. 10 White Miller. "Surely, the King of the Stream can see that," you say to yourself. Again you start with fresh zeal. There is not an instant when no fish is visible on the ten-foot rift before you. A cloudy blanket has been pulled across the sky. Black night has come. Cast, cast, cast; the White Miller upon which your last hope is pinned goes forth with the regularity of accented notes of the wedding march and comes back unimpeded. Or does it? The feel of the rod is not at all right; so you direct the wet line to fall against your face, running it down to the leader which you find in a maze of tangles. Does this misfortune daunt you? Not at all. Once more out comes the flashlight. The snarl is straightened

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out in a few minutes, but—Presto! the rise is over! Following in mutual disappointment your friend who has an acetylene torch attached to his hat, you feel your way gingerly among the bowlders lest you slip and get a ducking. As gracefully as a day-old lamb you slide down the inclined plane of a slippery rock, scoop your waders full of water and become one of the shining lights of "fisherman's luck." I, too, have had this identical experience except that I declined to first capture one of the flying insects. It was on the Paupack in Pennsylvania four years ago.





TOO GOOD FISHING IS BAD BUSINESS

LONG, long ago I lost all interest, first in pickerel and later in bass fishing. Perhaps my former love for each may return when I become too rheumatic to longer wade the streams. At least, I hope so. The story of these calamities, for I have never ceased to regret them, may save some enthusiast from similar misfortune.

As a boy I used to wade into a lake up to the roll of my pants and, with a long bamboo pole, skitter for pickerel among lily pads and eel grass. A strip of pork rind two inches long and half an inch wide was punctured near one end just enough to admit the barb of a hook by forcing it. The other end was slit into three tails an inch long. No bait was ever more effective or economical. It lured these alligator-mouthed gluttons from afar, and with occasional scrapings could be made to last until next hog-killing time.

Later in life while stopping one summer at Wainscot, L. I., in an attempt to balance with my wife our ledger of mutual enjoyment, I stole off

alone one day and chanced upon a pond which had all the aroma of pickerel. Therefore at the village store I purchased a duplication of my childhood outfit and soon thereafter, with the greatest catch of the sort I had ever made, returned to the boarding-house feeling quite proud. The guests raved over the array of pickerel as they trailed by a stout cord from my shoulder to the ground. But that was the last we ever saw of them. None came to the table for dinner that evening; they also failed to appear at breakfast. I then summoned courage to ask the waitress why their prolonged detention. She replied, "Oh, we never eat them. We feed them to the chickens." Which remark, begun and finished within one minute, withdrew from my system all desire to ever again indulge in merely an orgy of physical exercise and slaughter.

About fifteen years ago I bought a farm on Long Pond, one of the Belgrade Lakes in Maine. I found the bass waiting to entertain me. Their activities were so incessant that I soon learned the wisdom of withdrawing bait from the water when filling my pipe. Tiring of this alleged sport I then chose late afternoons for fishing the shallows near shore in the shade of the hills. By using three flies, my only pleasure came when three bass, fighting

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against each other, tore my leader apart and escaped. Some people declare Belgrade is fished out. Doubtless it is, for those who seek them in the silt-bottomed coves. At any rate, I sold my place, and am through with bass, at least until compelled by infirmities to do my angling from a boat.

Often I have been invited to a certain Canadian stream where I am assured that square-tailed natives average a pound and that the catch is limited only by desire. With my pickerel and bass experiences indelibly stamped upon my mind, I have always firmly declined. I would quite as soon hit Gene Tunney an unexpected punch on the nose as to jeopardize my zest for a stream where trout can be taken only by most careful methods.





CHASING BUTTERFLIES

AMONG the misinformation with which the student of trout fishing is regaled from all quarters is the injunction that before starting to fish he must first catch one of the flying insects which hover over the stream. He may then select from his fly-box its nearest duplicate, thereby making sure of the proper fly to use. Writers have extended themselves most convincingly to explain this specious theory. I admit that it is a pretty subject; beyond which it is mere words.

Patient entomologists claim to have discovered scores of different colored Ephemeridæ as they emerge with wings from our trout streams from day to day throughout the entire summer, not to consider the hundreds of distinct species of sub-aqueous beetles. The insect flight is no less jumbled in its component colors than the glasses of a kaleidoscope. I believe they all look good to the hungry fish, every blessed one of them.

And yet an evening discussion of the events of the day on a stream is never complete until at least one of the party shall have recounted the story of

his capture and minute examination through a magnifying glass of the particular mite whose kin on that day had been designated in some mysterious way to feed the fishes; all others were to be avoided. An innate fondness for fairy stories causes me to bend a listening ear to all such tales; they are very soothing. Then the sandman leads me off to bed, calmed for slumber and forgetfulness.

If the practice insured the most successful catch, there might be few skeptics, but irony decrees that he who chases butterflies gets nowhere. I have carefully observed this in its application to the creel. Were Socrates alive and engaged in the explosion of this seductively false doctrine I can mentally picture that wise philosopher asking these questions:

"Do you believe a hungry beggar would decline a cold turkey joint because he had not seen such a thing for twelve months?"

"Do you believe that after a year's estrangement from an angleworm a robin would require a new introduction before eating it, or a dog to a bone?"

"Conceding that these newly born fluttering mites of a certain color, hatched from the stream-nursed larva, are greedily devoured on sight, is it

CHASING BUTTERFLIES

not equally true that fish which are large enough to be kept have become familiar with and similarly fond of other styles of insect raiment during the year before or prior to that time?"

"Finally, do you believe an adult fish's instinct of recollection to be less acute than that of a beggar, a robin or a dog?"





COLOR—FIGHTING QUALITIES— FLAVOR

GREAT is the variation in the exterior color of trout. It corresponds with its environment and is provided by nature for protection against enemies. A further provision permits a gradual change of color to blend with the prevailing hue of its new home whenever a move is found desirable or necessary. After a freshet one is likely to find a silvery native or yellow-skinned trout of the so-called brown variety shifted from its patrol of the sunlit shallows into a cavernous pool where the greenish black back of the native or the deep bronze of the brown trout best harmonizes with its dusky surroundings.

A trout hooked in a surging brook will put up a gamier fight than one about double its size reared in the untroubled water of a lake. From birth the former has had to battle against currents for existence; its fins have a highly developed power, its body has the litheness of a panther, the eye is trained to unsurpassed alertness and the brain will more often than not outguess that of man.

It is much more beautiful than either the ouaniche or salmon, its illustrious cousins. Like both of them, it thrives in rushing water such as would soon exhaust the sturdy black bass as well as all the proletariat tribes of perch, pickerel, catfish and mongrels.

A question that often arises where trout fishing is discussed is why the flesh of some is white, of others pale golden and of still others graduated from light into deep pink similar to that of salmon. Ichthyologists are not agreed whether these colorations are family characteristics or are the result of the oil of fat, which is red, permeating to the greatest extent the flesh of only those favored with ample food of the most nourishing character.

The salmon-fleshed trout, whether native or brown, is immeasurably superior to its anemic companion both in fighting qualities and in its hold upon life. No reference is made to this striking fact in any treatise of my knowledge and I therefore doubt if it is generally known. Its discovery came primarily through dressing fish immediately after taking them, especially those of large size. In this manner my observation of color was closely allied with the degree of resistance. Soon I became impressed with the connection be-

tween a battler of exceptional vigor and his tinted flesh. Instead of being merely a coincidence, as I at first mistrusted, it was developed into an unvarying rule. To be able to declare whether the flesh of a struggling trout is white or colored is a matter of experience only.

Between the native and the brown there is no perceptible difference in their resistance or resourcefulness, apart from that which pertains to the color of the flesh. This admission is not an easy one to make, for the unmatched beauty of the native and its honorable tradition have awarded to it a position of respect which no other fish may ever hope to share. With the introduction of the browns into our streams soon came creels more heavily laden. They are more voracious than the natives and their relative growth so much more rapid that if two fingerlings, one of each species, were confined in the same pool for three years I believe the native would by then have been swallowed whole by the foreign cannibal. At least, it would be physically possible for this to occur. The slower growing natives are being devoured by the browns at such an alarming rate that they have been already exterminated from some of the streams of my knowledge, streams in which the

speckled beauties reigned supreme as recently as fifteen years ago.

There is undoubtedly a place for this fratricidal gourmand, for none is warier and its hat is always in the ring. Further, this domineering immigrant may be lifted a conquered victim from the water with no tinge of regret such as is often vouchsafed to the departing spirit of a superb native. That it can endure warmer water than the *salvelinus fontinalis* is a significant fact which paves the way for its prolific future. Such streams as the changed conditions have made unfit for fish of higher refinement ought to be devoted alone to the brown. Having demonstrated that it will not live in amity with the native, it should be deprived of such association.

The rainbow trout has been practically ignored in all that goes before and in what follows. Like a painted courtesan, it may be good to look at from a distance but that is all. It comes to us from California with readily visible scales, short head, small mouth and is not unlike what a cognate of the bass might be. When hooked, instead of keeping the skillful angler guessing every moment as both the native and brown do, it usually throws up the sponge after a few blustering leaps into the air.

These three trout are the kinds which dominate most of the good streams within two hundred miles of New York City. The rainbow, thanks to the wisdom of fish commissioners, has evidently been planted in comparatively few of them.

An epicure might claim the flesh of the native the best of all in flavor or succulence. I would like to agree but, in truth, I cannot. My sense of taste may have become dulled, for I have always been fond of caviare, pickled walnuts, pungent cheese, tobacco smoke and the like. Still, I am unwilling to acknowledge that the result of a test which I made to determine the edible supremacy of the native, brown or rainbow is less dependable than the verdict of a friend in the matter of coffee. After a game of bridge one evening he pronounced the coffee especially good. His host then exhibited for the delectation of the rest of the party the package of roasted cereal from which the concoction had been prepared. Appreciation is guided largely by desire. However, in following many bypaths in searching for information, I was once able to select from my creel three white-fleshed trout of the different kinds mentioned. After being fried, a boned slab from each was placed before me while I ate appraisingly with closed eyes as the plate was

COLOR—FIGHTING QUALITIES—FLAVOR

slowly turned. A similar test between white and salmon colored flesh favored the latter, which seemed to possess a definite richness not present in the white.





LAWS VERSUS PRESERVATION

BASED upon observation of the rapidly decreasing number of trout annually caught from many streams where most of my fishing has been done, I estimate that unless radical steps are taken to prevent, one of the most ancient and popular of all sports will within the next twenty-five years become largely a thing of the past except in private preserves. It is plain that if a species shall continue to exist, the various forces which tend toward its extinction must be abated to a point where they are at least counterbalanced by the powers of propagation and preservation. All of the many destructive forces, which include the keeping of small fish, the acts of predatory birds, vermin and those individuals who spear at night ostensibly for eels, and even the effects of freshets and droughts, are subject either in whole or in part to control through wise laws.

Those who know nothing of the joys of a mountain trout stream which, quoting Van Dyke, "is always luring us away from artificial life into restful companionship with nature," may also be un-

aware of the size of its army of devotees. Secretary Hoover in an address before the United States Fisheries Association in 1924 is quoted as having said, "I do not think it would be an exaggeration to say that during this season alone we have had upward of more than 2,000,000 anglers upon the streams of the United States. One single State has issued more than 200,000 individual licenses during the past summer."

It is a fact of common knowledge that trout are now less plentiful than before there were any State hatcheries to reinforce the natural supply. Of course, there must be a reason why this is so. Let us by careful study try to discover the insidious germs of destruction; then, if successful, let us move in one powerful body toward the complete annihilation of such of them as can be isolated so that posterity may be assured the enjoyment of a pleasure that should continue as long as trees grow and water runs. Is the trout going the way of the lobster, salmon, sturgeon, shad and oyster for lack of proper conservation? Somehow when I contemplate with humiliation the practical extinction of the buffalo during my own lifetime I feel that some of our present laws may be equally open to question.

If asked to try to solve this problem I would at least act with a confidence born of much deliberate thought. Of course, one of the reasons for poorer fishing is the ever-increasing number of men who are led into a new love for the great outdoors by good roads and the pleasurable means of modern travel. This is to be encouraged rather than discouraged, though corresponding toll must be taken elsewhere.

The denuded watersheds have transformed many trout streams, which in the old days tumbled down their rocky beds throughout all seasons, into mere trickles when now a drought places its withering blight upon the barren hillsides. The State might well acquire all forest land within the immediate watersheds of the sources of all natural trout streams, granting to present owners, in payment for their supervision, the right to use for fuel and fence posts all fallen or otherwise unmarketable trees. Let the experts figure the cost and see if it means more than an infinitesimal fraction of the total of State funds which have been used mainly for the pleasure of motorists! Wooded lands which have been cut over during the last twenty-five years (and there are few otherwise) are held by owner and assessor alike to be of the least value per

acre of the whole farm area. Another financial difference between buying such land for reforestation and the building of hard roads is that in the first instance there later and always thereafter will be income from the sale of mature timber. This may be thinned from year to year without destroying the water-holding efficiency of forests, while on the other hand, the fathering of a highway is only the beginning of expense which must continue to the end of time.

To-day it is the exception rather than the rule for a farm owner to apply for free trout to be placed in the stream flowing through his property. The State hatcheries are therefore led to neglect some of the finest brooks. Following proper legislation, nothing whatever could prevent the State from taking over for the benefit of the public all fishing privileges, reserving to the owners all their present rights other than depriving sportsmen of enjoyment. The value of such conveyances must be nominal, for the loss would be insignificant. From the legal angle, condemnation would be effective with any protesting owners. The hatcheries would soon be multiplying their capacities to meet the demands of enthusiastic applicants for fry and fingerlings to be planted intelligently in thousands

of spring run feeders of all brooks suitable for trout. At present, owing to a dearth of applications received at a hatchery of my knowledge, excess trout, by the motor truck load of cans, have been dumped conveniently near into sluggish streams, only to meet an untimely end.

Most of the best trout waters are now posted against trespass. In talking some years ago with Mr. Meehan, then Fish Commissioner of Pennsylvania, on this subject he contended that such portions of a brook where fishing has not been prohibited during any period of twenty-one years become automatically open to the public through the law of adverse possession. He also assured me that once State trout are planted at the owner's request in the stream flowing through his farm never thereafter may fishing in that portion of it be legally prevented, irrespective of change of ownership. A third claim, once acted upon by a Scranton fishing club, is to the effect that a stream which has at any period served in general lumbering operations for the floating of logs became thereby a public highway and therefore open to any reasonable public use. This club, finding one spring that their favorite trouting rendezvous had been posted, dispatched one of its members to test

this principle of common law. After stating his intention to the owner of lands abutting the stream, he dropped from the center of a county bridge into the water and began fishing. The owner placed him under arrest and accompanied him to the justice of the peace, who fined the fisherman ten dollars. Next the club brought suit for the recovery of the fine. The case came before the same judge who had advised the posting of the trespass notices and it is therefore not strange that he decided in favor of the landowner. There, I believe, the matter was dropped. Whether any or all three of these really important questions have ever been carried into the Supreme Court for final settlement I do not know, but it is a significant fact that posting is constantly increasing toward the time when there will be few available streams left. The true sportsman will obey the law; he is none the less concerned with equity.

Any movement toward the reclamation of our streams for the enjoyment of millions of people ought not to disturb the possessions of fishing organizations. I am not a member of any such organization; hence my view is without bias. Barring such of them as still permit the use of bait, their methods and rules are for the good of the

sport. Their woodlands are preserved; stocking is done at their expense, many fish gravitating to portions of streams not owned by them; the limit of catch is generally less than that permitted by State laws. These organizations are needed as a nucleus around which to rally in a powerful effort to save for all time what is now steadily approaching practical extinction. Even the owners of affected lands may be counted on to favor the desired legislation, for farmers as a class are not so prosperous but that they will welcome receiving from the State payment for what they may continue to enjoy.

Such a project would cost each of the States roundabout New York City much money, but the gain would be of inestimable value. Trout fishing may be likened to the Sistine Madonna in that there is nothing at any price which can take its place. Bond issues run high into the millions every year for State roads, public parks, bridges, dredging waterways and numerous other desirable public enterprises, none of which is more essential to the happiness of present and future generations than the saving of our trout streams. New Jersey has just expended \$25,000,000 for thirteen miles

of highway connecting the vehicular tunnel under the Hudson River with Newark. Would \$1,000,000 seem extravagant to insure forever to her people such trout fishing as might be possible in many of her streams in the northern part of the State! Would not the expenditure of five or even ten times that sum by New York and Pennsylvania be a mighty step in preserving for posterity a recreation which under our present negligence must surely be lost!

The laws of most States allow the keeping of fish only six inches long. A trout of that size has but recently passed its first birthday. It is then usually one of a school from which the man who fishes for numbers may capture many of these little innocents before they realize the sort of pest that is veritably robbing the cradle upon which the future sport of the brook must depend. At this stage in its life there is present only a faint spark of the fighting qualities that will develop into a glorious fury if such fish are returned unhurt to the water. While a person of this type would be the one to boast of the number of his catch, still even he might be reluctant to throw back the lid of his creel to exhibit its contents. Such work is

not to be proud of. Next, the edible portions of a six-inch trout are too minute to much more than impart flavor to the palate.

As there is neither satisfaction in catching nor in eating a fish so small, why should not the law be amended for their protection? Left in the stream another year, they will then average from eight to nine inches long. The former ought to be the minimum size permitted to be kept. If not caught then, they will grow to be a foot long under favorable conditions by the third summer. Each one of these will give a royal account of itself before being subdued. In every trout that is lucky enough to escape into the fourth summer, now from fifteen to seventeen inches in length, there lies a potential battle worthy of record. A single trout of this age is more to be prized than a barrel full of such little tots as may now be massacred under the present law.





SALVELINUS FONTINALIS REDIVIVUS

WITH this constructive legislation accomplished, there are various important refinements pressing for attention. Other popular sports of the present day, all of them, have lived chiefly because of definite rules which make success difficult for others than the most expert, thereby stimulating the novice with ambition to graduate from the ranks of the awkward squad.

Golf languished and became a common butt for ridicule in its early days in this country until the introduction of appalling bunkers, yawning traps and rolling greens changed the formerly successful player into a mere duffer; the flying wedge was of deadly effect and had to be eliminated in the interest of football; deer were so easily run down and slaughtered with the aid of dogs and pump guns that both are now debarred from the woods during the open season; if unlimited resiliency of the baseball were permitted, home runs would be the rule and soon the last game would be played. Similarly wise measures prevail through-

out the whole range of sport, trout fishing being a notable exception. In this the murderous bait hook and the delicate little fly, which latter very rarely engages a vital part, are on an equal footing under the law. The former method is more cruel than netting or dynamiting, for in its trail are trout too small to keep and so badly injured that death by slow torture must result. The era of fishing for trout with bait ought to be brought quickly to a close. Those addicts who have the right spirit will then laud their enforced transformation from the ignobility of "men who go fishing" into the higher realm of "fishermen." Any one who has ever lightly cocked a fly upon a glassy pool and witnessed a husky trout open its mouth, expand its gills and draw in the dainty-looking morsel will agree that bait fishing might best be legally dispensed with.

Laws governing the opening and closing of the season are unfathomably stupid. Latitude and altitude in the vicinity of the best streams within two hundred miles from New York City insure a temperature much the same. Yet the season closes in Connecticut on June 30, in Massachusetts, New Jersey and Pennsylvania on July 31 and in New York on August 31, excepting that in Essex

County it extends over Labor Day. Some argue that New York is making a mistake in this matter; that the taking of female trout with the well developed egg sacs of late August causes a loss of all this spawn. This is very true, but it is equally true that the result would be identical if these trout had been caught earlier in the season. Troutmen are naturally influenced in choosing places for spending their vacations by the laws controlling fishing. Those States which close the season before most vacations occur are making an economic blunder which is being turned to much profit by the owners of hotels and boarding-houses in New York.

The opening of the trout season in the five States named ranges from April 1 to April 15. This is a period when the fish are thin and at their worst, when brooks are often ice-anchored and when the penetrating chill turns vaunted pleasure into an unenjoyable travesty. For many years I used to deem it my duty to accept the legal invitation to appear on some stream the very first day of the season regardless of the normally inclement weather. One of my last experiences, nearly two decades ago, is similar in essentials to what is still being repeated by others.

Three of us were to start for the Konkopot in

the Berkshires on April 14. That morning I awoke to find the ground covered with snow. My friends had evidently held a chamber conference by telephone for while still at breakfast I received a message from one of them as follows: "Of course the trip is off. No one but a damned fool would go fishing a day like this." My kit was packed and my business plans arranged for the following seven days. To back out was not to be thought of. Besides, the flowers might be blooming up in the mountains—such is the foolish optimism of the ardent angler. So, replying briefly, "You will see one go by your house in a few minutes," off I started alone.

The clouds floated lazily away into space and the sun smiled from an azure sky while the halting train panted up the valley of the Housatonic and stopped for me at Great Barrington. I reached the farmhouse at Monterey in time for a late dinner and next morning was delighted to find that the weather clerk had set the signals for a calm, sunny day. Regretful that my friends had flunked, I went forth and had a very gruesome time with a lot of big-headed, semi-dormant fish. Before quitting the stream my cold hands and feet reminded me that

a definite change had taken place in the temperature.

That evening as I sat with the family before the open fire my friends suddenly appeared. The bright, warm sun in the city had aroused their enthusiasm but the seven-mile drive in the cold mountain air had later frozen it into an apparently unthawable state. They paced back and forth like caged lions for some time before getting up courage to remove their overcoats. And the next day! It was precisely like that which invariably awaits in stealth behind a capricious sun to entrap all those who scatter into the wilds as soon as the season is idiotically opened. The wind blew a gale; the fine snow searched every window and door crevice, intent upon making life for us as miserable as possible. Fishing was out of the question. The weather continued unfit for man or beast and, tired of waiting for one of the balmy days which rarely come at that time of year, we cut our intended stay in half and returned home to get warm.

The present shivery opening of the trout season is more inauspicious and much less excusable than a legal holiday in winter or early spring. We have learned to celebrate Thanksgiving Day because we

are glad to be alive, Christmas because we fear that we may some day be dead, and New Year's because in only five months more our fun with the trout will start in earnest. It is the feasting element which puts these days across year after year. But what about the 12th and the 22d of February? That Lincoln and Washington were born during such an inclement season is nothing less than a national misfortune. Now that there is so little choice between the platforms of the two dominant political parties, a voter finds himself mainly interested in learning when the respective presidential nominees were born so that, if possible, his ballot may be cast for a candidate whose burst into the earthly arena took place on a glorious summer day. With such a carefully chosen occupant in the seat of seats, if an unfortunate occasion should arise to later number him among the great we shall then, by our own foresight, have a holiday of practical utility—a constructive thought for aspiring, potential parents.

Even in middle May the mountain country looks most desolate. The oaks and many other trees are then still leafless skeletons, the dirt roads are treacherous with spongy mud, and my records show the weather to be cold and stormy more than

otherwise. For example, glancing back to 1907, at the Hearthstone Inn on the Willowemoc, I find recorded, "May 19, cold rain; 20th, strong wind, 50 degrees temperature; 21st, snow, 30 degrees." This is average; not exceptional. In the following year at De Bruce there was a steady, chilling rain from May 20 to 23, inclusive. I recall having on that trip stood in the "goat" pool with chattering teeth and nothing left to impart a punch to my torpid circulation. By no stretch of the imagination may such hardship be disguised as pleasure. Referring to a more recent time, May 10, 1919, I was driven from the Woodland Brook near Phoenicia by a biting wind and rain which was a howling snowstorm on the mountainside half a mile distant. Taking refuge in a barn while waiting for my pal, I was barely able to unbutton his sleet-laden coat when he arrived with hands numb and useless.

No, the tulips and jonquils of May in Central Park do not even remotely suggest the climate where trout make their habitat. From Decoration Day to Labor Day, inclusive, covers the entire normal vacation period and ought, I believe, be made to mark the beginning and end of the trouting season.

The last step toward replenishing our streams, and one of no small importance, will be the return of all uninjured female trout, regardless of size, to the water. It would seem that there must, of course, be laws to safeguard the female of this species, as there are against the killing of doe deer, hen pheasants and other female wild game. There is no such legal prohibition in any State regarding trout.

The male quadruped and bird are prepared by nature to care for the fecundity of many females; this is common knowledge. In the absence of any known evidence to the contrary it is proper to assume that fish are not abnormal in this respect. The Bureau of Fisheries in Washington has no records indicating an efficient ratio of males to females for stream propagation. Commissioner O'Malley has submitted to me reports of various catches by net of trout and smelt (the latter also a salmonoid) for breeding purposes. These show that males greatly outnumber females. His deduction is, therefore, that "perpetuation of the species depends in some way upon a preponderance of males." Owing to the helpful attitude of his department I feel it discourteous to even wonder why the habitual slaughter of most of the bull calves

has still left the United States with all the cattle desired. Not more than one in ten is kept for breeding purposes. The preponderance of male calves born might also seem demanded by nature to perpetuate the species, but such does not appear to be the case. The superintendent of the State Fish Hatchery at Hackettstown is authority for the statement that trout raised there average fifty per cent more males than females and that, quoting from his letter, "In our hatchery work we get the best results in using about 60 males to every 80 to 100 females according to the season." So, with a bountiful supply of males available only from three-fifths to three-quarters of them are used. As abundance often invites waste it is a natural thought that the really necessary ratio might be much less than here quoted. In other words, is it not possible that one male, enjoying the freedom of his native element, may be counted upon to maintain the law of averages in so far as his available time permits? At least we know that there are three males in the stream to every pair of females. We also know that a female containing possibly two thousand embryo lives is more vital to propagation than an excess male.

When fishing for the sport of it and not for

fish to eat, it will add to your virtues and to your interest to recognize the external difference in sex and to return all females to the water. You are sure to err at first. I have studied the sexes many years and even now often make a wrong guess, especially early in the season when variations are less pronounced than as spawning time approaches. The male has a longer head; the lower jaw is somewhat hooked and bears a little button or knob at the extreme end; the skin on the back is duller but the spots along the sides are more brilliant; the line from just back of the head near the dorsal fin to the end of the upper jaw is apt to be concave rather than convex; as the season advances his coloration becomes more vivid and he is thinner from side to side and deeper dorso-ventrally than the female. These differences apply to adult trout only. They are hardly apparent in fish less than six inches long, all of which must be put back where they belong.



THE HAVOC OF FRESHETS

ON June 17, 1922, the Lackawaxen in Wayne County, Pa., was deluged by the greatest cloudburst ever known in that region. It tore out concrete bridges, denuded farms of their best valley soil and ruined the fishing. From the farmhouse I witnessed countless cascades of foam tumbling down the pasture fields, changing the gurgling brook of crystal water into a raging, muddy river several hundred feet wide. Enormous trees which had held undisputed dominion for perhaps a century were uprooted and carried away as easily as chips might have been the day before.

Like the sullen growls that follow thunderstorms, the lowering clouds continued to spill more water into this valley from day to day whenever the stream showed the faintest signs of clearing. Each fresh contribution stirred the thick coat of mud on rocks in the bed and prolonged the chocolate color of the water in a most exasperating manner. During those long days of patient waiting I read every book within sight from O. Henry down.

After finishing the thrills of a mail order catalog there was nothing left to do but return home. So on the sixteenth day and without wetting a line I left for New York in another downpour.

A day or so later a friend telephoned to make the imperishable inquiry, "What luck?" On learning the disappointing report he ventured to inquire what I thought the weather would be like about two weeks later. I was indeed flattered by the compliment of being considered a reliable weather prophet despite having selected for my own fishing trip some of the worst that had ever been made. Being endowed with an unquenchably sanguine temperament, I assured him that I would "give my shirt" to be there at the time stated. "Then come on up with me," he said with enthusiasm. My business would not permit anything of the sort, so I replied evasively, "I'll think it over." An ever-ready thinker is usually able to hurdle all mental hazards when trouting is mentioned; so within a few seconds I agreed to go.

We found the stream a mere series of trickles between rocks. The powerful current seemed to have pulled the water out almost as completely as though siphoned. The few meager pools were as lifeless as a graveyard. Evidently such fish as had

THE HAVOC OF FRESHETS

not perished in the land pockets of adjacent fields when the water receded had all been carried down into the distant Delaware. It would take months for any one of them to work its way back even if it chanced to nose into the right port.

Then it was that we decided to try out the Tunkhannock about fifteen miles away on the other side of the mountain. We hoped this had escaped the flood. Before starting off we got directions from an obliging native. They were prophetic.

"I hain't been to Smiley Holler fur mor'n fifty year," he said, "but I hain't furgot the hill yuh gotta go down. She's th' longest hill and the steepest hill I ever see." He swung his wad of consolation into the other cheek, hit an inquisitive toad straight between the eyes with an unmeasured pint of tobacco extract, and added, "Th' fu'ther yuh git th' less she leans till nigh th' bottom she stands plumb up on her tail."

He proved to be a truthful man, though rather conservative. My friend was a wonderful driver. I did not appreciate it then, but now, looking back at that ride which time has placed in perspective, I hereby give him full credit for having brought me through alive. He has a commanding presence

and would have made an impressive major general. His type sits anything well, though he seemed a trifle large for his mount on this occasion. He spread over on both sides. To take a peek down the road, which did not often interest him, he was compelled to lean well forward and duck his head. His skill in driving was so great that he did not hesitate to use both hands to show me the length of a trout he expected to take from the Tunkhannock, following which he got back into the road with no trouble whatever.

To reach the summit of the mountain over which we were routed, his ever-faithful Elizabeth had to exert all her energy. No driver could have been more humane. He helped her up many a tight pull by swaying his body forward and backward even though to the anguish of the upholstery back of his shoulders. He had inherited this trick from pushing on the lines when buggy riding. Her poor frame fairly quivered as she dragged her reluctant appendages over each heartbreaking rise. She had lost her capacity to perspire if she ever possessed any. Being of the truly feminine, it was more dainty of her to glow; this she did demurely under her hood. Then she actually boiled from her exertions. My heart went out to her in these moments

of her great distress when, presently, as if by magic, her whole mien changed completely.

There is something very disconcerting about a strange mountainside declining to no visible end. With nothing ahead upon which to rivet the eye to the perpendicular one may seem to be moving along on a horizontal plane and yet actually quite otherwise.

We fairly flew down this narrow, serpentine mountain road in our rattling, bounding chariot. Before I ceased wondering at what a marvel she was for speed the impact of a thank-you-ma'am broke off the exhaust under our feet. Then an up-standing rock smashed her gear-case. Realizing that she, like all runaway females, might go wrong if uncurbed, all brakes were then set against her headstrong ways, which started a series of contortions that made Tex Austin's Rodeo seem as gentle as a corral of pet lambs. The broken crank-case pressed against part of her vitals and she screeched like a frightened woodchuck; she bounded like a wild gazelle, plunged with the abandon of a porpoise and sidled like a land-crab to the verge of the ever-widening gulch that had eaten away most of the road. Many a time in the last mile when she pointed her nose straight down

toward the bowels of the earth my friend saved us from an expedition into subterranean regions by forcing her head aloft; by exerting an upward leverage on the wheel he made her jump the abysses that cut the highway into links like sausages.

"It is the same idea as jerking a horse's head up when he starts to stumble," my masterful friend explained as we bounded on.

Only through his consummate knowledge of every wrinkle of the game, I am sure, did we ever reach the foot of that awful hill alive. There she came to a dead stop; cowed, subdued and suspiciously silent. In fact, she had fainted and declined to be resuscitated. She plainly was suffering from edema of the lungs, for water was leaking from them. She was also parting with the dose of oil which had been administered for her own good. Neither of us was a physician. We knew nothing whatever of the needed treatment for a patient *in extremis*. Here we were, according to the geodetic map issued by our Government, in the very center of the village of Smiley Hollow, but there was no help within sight, not a house nor a human being.

If the recent deluge had been cruel to the Lackawaxen it had been worse than brutal to the

Tunkhannock which lay at our feet. Immense trees locked arms and legs in its bed; parts of concrete bridges up to twenty feet square were found far from any highway. The only surviving kind of fish remaining was the chub, which was there because of having followed its instinct to burrow deep into mud when trouble threatens.

Our next problem was to get back home. This was sufficiently serious to put us both into a prayerful mood. Our—I had intended to say our “car”—our sole reliance was apparently through; the washing out of bridges had evidently made roads impassable; the one that we had just come down we certainly could never climb up.

We are told that if one has perfect faith such provision as may seem meet will be made. So with implicit trust we scanned the heavens for succor and, sure enough, there it was up in the sky where we had been. The black angel developed quickly into a motor car and a man. Presently he came to a halt right beside us. After a courteous salutation, I asked, “Do you know anything about this?” pointing to our pegged-out Pegasus.

He appeared neither to see nor hear me. Craning his long neck around for an unobstructed view, he looked back upon the scene of his exciting flight

and, with shocking brevity, observed, "That's a helluva hill."

We were anxious to be going and, partly ignoring his statement of a truism, I said, "Yes, but do you understand this thing?"

With his face still glued heavenward he repeated his unrepentant, "That's one helluva hill."

Then he got out, lifted our hood, looked in, clamped the hood down again, said that he did not understand the make, and off we started much to his amazement and to our own. We were on our way, but whither we knew not. A missing bridge soon told us to try another course. We did and another bridgeless ravine stopped us.

At last we discerned on a hilltop ahead a farmhouse and a man with a harnessed horse standing near it. We wondered what they were doing in that God-forsaken region. Apparently they were doing nothing at all. Neither man nor horse moved as we approached, though the house seemed to vibrate from the sound waves of our vehicle. This man must be Mr. Smiley himself, we agreed, for a broad grin spread over his lean and hungry looking face as we drew nearer with our two-piece orchestra, the disconnected putter and screeching calliope. We stopped involuntarily. After his horse

had pulled us up the cliffy road in front of his house we discovered that we had only two-thirds of a tankful of gasoline, whereas we ought to have known that the old girl always balked at such an angle unless well tanked up. We asked Mr. Smiley, assuming that to be his name, how much for the wear and tear and he drawled in a charitable voice:

"Oh, I can't charge you much for that. I'm mighty glad to be of help to strangers in these parts. Ten dollars'll be about right."

It then dawned upon us why this kindly, simple-minded farmer lived just where he did in this step-child patch of desertion. But the rest of his services were gratis. We requested directions to Herrick Center. From there we knew the way. With great detail he told us to continue down the road about a mile until we came to a house, then to take the first left turn, then the second right and so on. Thoroughly confused, we asked him if he had to take such a roundabout course every time he went to Herrick Center and he replied with the artlessness of a prattling child, "No, I go straight out the pike over there by the school-house."



ETHICS OF THE STREAM

LEARNING to cast well is only the first step in an exacting series of requirements before the greatest success is possible. By success is not meant the heaviest creel. The artist does not measure his achievement by the dimensions of his canvas, nor does the troutman reckon his pleasure by poundage. He would rather take from a root-guarded cavern a fish that is known to be there and which has steadfastly defied the efforts of others than catch a dozen of equal size from open pools where less skill is demanded. He would also count it a greater victory to bring a two-pound fish to net with a leader of such fineness as to be almost invisible in water than to capture one twice its weight with a heavy, unbreakable gut from which there could be no escape.

When seeking to cross a barbed wire fence with a companion press down with the foot one of the lower strands midway between the posts and raise the one above it by hand. Your friend will do the same for you after passing through.

In carrying a set-up rod through woodland

point the tip through brush or trees ahead and follow it. Thus it is always under observation. On the other hand, if trailed behind, the line may become caught over a twig, tearing off the fly or snapping the leader, or the rod may be broken by a sharp angle between trees due to an altered course of travel.

When leading the way through woods with a companion it is no kindness to him for you to hold back interfering branches. Being released too soon, they might snap an eye out. He should follow at a safe distance so that the limbs shall have resumed their normal position.

Humanity requires that a captured fish be immediately relieved from suffering. A sharp blow on the back of its head from a stout billy would be the best way, except that all needless impedimenta are best dispensed with. A better plan is to grasp the fish dorso-ventrally with the left hand; then with the right thumb nail pressing against the upper part of the junction between head and body and the forefinger in its mouth bend the head upward until the spinal column is felt or heard to snap. Life ceases at once and the fish lies in perfect form instead of wrenched out of shape by its final agonies if left to die slowly in the creel.

To the casual observer some of the frequenters of our most popular streams might appear to have entered an endurance contest embracing various forms of athletic exercises. The enthusiastic novice with tireless legs and a willing heart races along under the impression that the more ground he covers the larger must be his catch. That will-o'-the-wisp of better fishing just ahead is to him no delusion; it is a never-fading reality which bids him to hasten on through even the very choicest pools. And when the day is far spent he returns disappointed to headquarters with a few little curled and wrinkled air-dried and sun-baked fish rattling like castanets in the bottom of his fly-blown creel. Of course he blames his poor luck to the Fates. It never occurs to him that his noisy speed has frightened the timid fish to cover long before his lure is hurriedly presented. Nor does he understand why the more fortunate sportsmen whom he hailed so heartily as he sloshed along through the pools they were fishing now pay him scant attention. He has broken unwritten laws of the stream and well deserves all that usually comes to him.

A writer in one of the sporting publications boasts of having caught "over 350 fine trout in a

short day's fishing." This should have been a humble confession from his knees, coupled with a devout prayer that if forgiven he might never be permitted to repeat such wanton devastation. Never should more fish be taken than will be used for food. Farmers through whose properties most of the trout streams flow do not often have the time during trouting season to fish and few could succeed if they were to try. They are surely entitled to some consideration for granting one the courtesy of their brooks. I have met those who had never known the taste of trout. Once I walked up to the house of a farmer after taking a nice lot from his stream and, handing him my creel for him to dump into a pan, said "I would like to leave these with you." He took the creel accommodatingly but with no understanding of what I meant. As he made no motion to get a receptacle for the fish I suggested that he do so and let me have my creel back. Astonishment was expressed by his face no less than by his inquiry. "You don't mean to give me the fish, do you?" He then said that he had lived there fifty years and that this was the first time he had ever been given any trout from his stream.

It is a common practice for those who fish

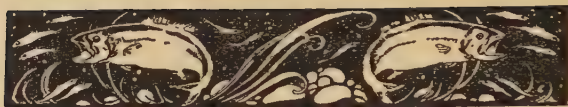
downstream to notify their friends that they have passed certain points by erecting between rocks in the bed leafy boughs so conspicuously that attention is bound to be attracted. These signals are placed almost invariably at the foot of pools and innocently enough, I am sure. They doubtless serve their purpose but at the same time work an unfair hardship upon those who fish upstream. What can be more disconcerting than to find such a signal rising from the water directly where the line would fall if the fly were placed properly at the upper end of the pool?

The woodland stream of from ten to twenty feet width is especially interesting because of the difficulties it presents to upstream fishing. Many of the choicest pools are so carefully protected by the low-growing branches of beeches and birches that no fly may be placed thereon in such a state. Obviously, the wise thing to do is to make these pools fishable. It is here assumed that you plan to either return to the same pools later in the day or that you are to remain with this stream for a longer period. First stand at the foot of the spread-out water at a point from which you would naturally do the casting. Here you may see which limbs are in the way. Remove them with your big jack-knife

ETHICS OF THE STREAM

and cast them away up on the bank. Do not drop them into the water, to be carried into other pools. Take off no more branches than are actually in the way of good casting. Having done a kindly act for any fisherman who may happen along, besides insuring better sport for yourself, you may continue on your way with a properly righteous feeling.





RANDOM NOTES

THE fly-eye should always be turned back. If turned forward it becomes a guard, even though minute, in line with the point of the hook. The direction of the turn has no perceptible effect upon the proper alighting of the fly.

Quite frequently the hook-eye of the fly is found to be clogged so that the tippet of the leader cannot be passed through for tying. Under the lapel of your coat keep a small black-headed steel pin with which to clear the hole. It is also useful in freeing the stray hackle which is often caught when the knot is made. Such a pin is easier to handle than a needle. Brass pins are too large to pass through the hole.

In midsummer, when the water of the main stream is warm and the trout will therefore not rise, try to think of a place where a spring run empties into it. There you are likely to find fish in numbers if the junction be fairly deep, which is frequently the case. They lie all headed toward the

rivulet, filling their gills with the cool elixir and feeling right for any morsel resembling food.

Mention has already been made about the proper use of the landing net. Before removing the trout one should go to shore and several yards away from the water. The net should be raised level with the chest, quickly dropped and pulled aside, leaving the fish to fall to the ground with a loose line. The faithful little fly is then ready to be released without becoming caught in the meshes of the net.

Some one may tell you, for it is written in books, not to let a trout come to the surface when he is being played. This might be accomplished by cleaving him with a tomahawk or by tickling him with the tip of your rod until he laughs himself to death, as easily as by any other known method. Once a fish of fair size decides to come up into the air or to beat a rat-tat with his tail on the surface of the water, you are wholly powerless to prevent his doing so. Nor is such an incident worrisome if strain be temporarily released from the line.

Attention should be given frequently to seeing

that the hook point is all right. A companion who was trying his best to pass from bait to fly, more to please me than for any faith he had in the latter, I found ahead of me one day, harassed by trout that he could not seem to take hold of. On the theory that with three flies he could catch three times as many as with one, he had his leader fully decorated and a school of young fish had turned themselves loose to eat them. With each failure to hook one of the little miscreants he swore softly to himself. After watching him unseen for some minutes I stepped to his side and suggested that he look at the points of his hooks. They had all been turned by being snaked across more or less submerged stones.

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When the water is clear and low, as it is likely to be from about the middle of June throughout the remainder of the season, then perhaps the most difficult task is to take a trout from a pool terminating in a long, thin lip. At the foot of each of such pools there is often stationed a sentinel trout. Your only hope of success at the head where the big fish lie is to catch the guard napping. If lucky, you may do this by first carefully searching the

foot with as long a line as possible to avoid being seen, drawing the victim quickly over the lip downstream before he has time to realize what has happened. Then and only then may you confidently approach the deep water at the head, for if you fail to remove the guard he will on catching sight of you shoot like a streak up to his friends with all the importance of a Paul Revere and they will instantly take to their dug-outs.

Only by crediting your proposed antagonist with wonderfully developed instincts of observation and fear may you hope for uniform ultimate success. Do not think of the trout in the same terms as other fresh-water fish. Even the sporty small-mouth black bass is by comparison an aquatic moron. Though most men fish occasionally, I judge that many of them know little about fish of any kind. A friend not yet famous for his fishing propensities enthused recently to me about some bass fishing he had been enjoying. I inquired with interest, "Small or large mouthed?" "Oh, just medium," was his reply. Another friend on his return from the Adirondacks told me of some fine fishing he had had up there. He endeavored to in-

YE GODS AND LITTLE FISHES

form me as to the species that had so delighted him but could not remember. "Porgies?" I ventured. "Yes, I think that's the kind, porgies," he repeated gratefully.

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The trout likes to breakfast with the rising of the sun. Dewy diamonds sparkle from fern tips and birds break into song while he enjoys his morning repast by selecting the dainty morsels which fall to his lot from the water, the air and overhanging trees. Then with nothing of especial importance to occupy his attention he takes a comfortable position alongside a rock or stump and there allows the day to slip lazily by except for an occasional dart to pick up some unusually tempting bit of food. He pays little heed to the midday meal unless he has failed to secure a satisfying breakfast. As the day nears its end he, like the voluptuous Sybarite, glides out into the open and feeds upon the hatches of aquatic insects as they feebly flutter into the air. He is a reckless gourmet, this sated beauty, and the wonder is that he fears neither indigestion nor constipation. I recall a glutton that had a big grasshopper packed into his gullet against a stomach tightly distended

RANDOM NOTES

with bugs, minnows and crawfish. And yet he could not resist the Cahill!

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You may never need a compass but if you should you might want it very badly. Once in the Maine woods I became more utterly lost than Charlie Ross. He probably knew where he was though none of the searchers did. I did not know where I was and no one else did. In attempting to make a short cut to camp under a dull gray sky and with no compass I got completely twisted about without knowing it for a long time. Starting with a fair sense of direction, I tramped through the forest enjoying everything about me until I came upon a place I had passed an hour before. I was lost in a trackless forest! Though confident of finding my way out, that faithful heart of mine seemed unnecessarily frightened and refused to be calmed until I landed it at a little brook after following for what may have been miles every decline within sight from my devious path. From there it became only a question of endurance. There could be no more traveling in circles. Guided by the creek which was bound somewhere to be crossed by a highway, I was late, tired and hungry on reaching

camp, but underlying all was the deep satisfaction of having had a real opportunity to apply a rule which is infallible for one lost in undulating or hilly woodland.

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No man is complete without a trout stream—so I thought as I bargained for one on the Hudson slope of the Catskills. It was late the following summer when I made a week-end trip to try it out. It proved to be as productive as it was varied in beauty but I did not like the conditions which I found to exist in the locality and soon got rid of it.

As I reached the Sunday night boat for home the enormous crowd aboard led me to commend my foresight in having reserved a room. The long line of applicants before the ticket window became an interesting study. Everybody wanted rooms but there were not enough to go around. Even most of those who claimed to have made reservations were forced to retire bedless. It then dawned upon me that such might likewise be my fate; so, falling into line, I reached the window in due time and gave my name, adding that a room had been reserved for me. The purser ran his finger perfunctorily down a list of names and, coming to a halt,

asked, "Sloan?" Ananias was a most deliberate liar with no vim whatever—he had none of the "eat'em alive" spirit about him—but as for me, I snapped mine right out like lightning. As the officer handed me the key I felt that he might have called me Nebuchadnezzar without giving offense.

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In fishing a likely pool where you feel that a fish must be lurking, instead of giving up after a few unproductive casts it may be worth while to stick to it until success results or until it is plain that your presence has been detected.

One day I failed to hook a fine fish that rose just ahead of a great boulder. The fly ticked him enough to make him shy and he would not rise again though I waited to light and finish a pipe before trying him. The following day on reaching the place I felt confident of action. Getting the distance by casting close to shore far away from him, I then placed the fly two feet above his rock; it was carried down gracefully but not alluringly. Feeling sure that he was there, I made a dozen casts and still nothing happened. Then another fly was served repeatedly without a visible stir from him, and still another. I had about reached the conclusion that he had gone visiting but before con-

tinuing upstream restored the Mills Ripple with which I had begun. The fifth time it lit he went for it with a rush, doubtless enraged by its persistent annoyance. That was the forty-first cast.

On reaching each bit of water, it is well to appraise its worth in casts. A dozen are none too many for a short, chuggy pool with a deep head. A single cast is sufficient in any one place on rifts or other shallows.

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I believe there exists a pronounced affinity between artificial flies and trees, especially those branches that hang over water too deep to wade. In case of such a "hang-up" there is rarely any need to lose the fly and most or all of the leader. With rod in one hand and line in the other, both spread wide apart, fish for the fly with the line at the rod-tip. If it hangs free, only a few attempts will suffice to catch it between line and rod. As you gently pull, permit the line to unspool from the reel. When you have the entire leader pulled down untie it from the line. Pull the line with the rod through the interfering branches even if by doing so you fortunately lose an infirm section of it, and re-tie the leader.

More often, instead of hanging free, the fly will

have made a tight loop around a branch and back again around the leader for good measure. This is not a case where coaxing or fussing will have any effect. If the branch is too large or too tall to be brought down by hooking the line over it in the manner above described it may be made to yield to the weight of the body applied near the trunk and brought to earth that way. By yanking, it is possible to lose six leaders and eighteen flies within an hour. A friend of mine, and a mighty sensible companion otherwise, did it one day on the Pocono Creek and can do it again whenever the opportunity presents itself.

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It is my belief that rattlers and copperheads, either or both, are to be found in most, if not all, trouting regions. While tramping up a logging road near Tenmile River in Sullivan County I witnessed the remains of many dead copperheads killed by the lumberjacks, but to my best knowledge I have never yet seen a live venomous snake except in captivity. Perhaps I fear them as much as any one; still that has never impressed me as a sufficient reason for looking for them. The truism that if you look for trouble you are bound to find it, I believe applies quite as much to snakes as to

anything else. Some men are said to see snakes often, or think they do, which may be even worse. Whenever I hear an ominous rattle I move on in the opposite direction and there the matter is dropped by both parties.

Whether legs are wholly covered by high waders or only the calf and shin are protected by khaki puttees when "wading wet" one may feel reasonably safe from these reptiles. Authorities agree that snakes rarely strike as high as a foot off the ground. Either armor would doubtless turn the fangs and render them harmless. However, as heedless as I may appear, my courage seems strengthened by knowing that down in one corner of the back flap pocket of my coat there has been nestled these many years an unopened bottle of potassium permanganate crystals, a razor blade and a tourniquet thong. Some say that whisky is good for snake bites; others are against it. When anticipating the possibility of being bitten it might be worth trying for the benefit of science.

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The soles of most wading shoes are supplied bountifully with square-headed hob-nails which add ounces of unnecessary weight; also, being relatively soft iron, they soon are worn smooth and

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then utterly fail in their avowed mission of gripping slippery rocks. They may be replaced advantageously by one-quarter the number and weight of hard steel hob-screws which, being spaced well apart, will bite into the uneven surfaced rocks from various angles. The substitution is best made by using a carpenter's brace in connection with the slotted tool that is supplied with the screws. If the brace-chuck does not take a firm grip, flatten the round shank of this screw-setter the merest trifle on an emery wheel or by filing. This method will save hours of time and palm soreness as against using the punch handle that is furnished for the purpose.

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The beautiful but decadent Willowemoc reminds me of an extraordinary exhibition of memory displayed by a colored train porter. We were four and bound for the old Hearthstone Inn at De Bruce. As the train approached Middletown the porter asked if we would like to have lunch taken aboard there. He wired our order ahead. It was simple, though as widely varied as four different tastes could possibly dictate. A year later the same enthusiastic quartet repeated the trip. When nearing Middletown a colored porter in-

quired if he might order our lunch. We favored the suggestion but spent so much of the limited time available in vainly trying to decide what to eat that he politely asked if we would like the same as we had ordered on our last trip. No one of us had the faintest recollection of the porter nor of the make-up of our order but we recalled that the lunch was satisfactory and blindly instructed him to repeat. When it came, each soon realized that there was placed before him an exact duplicate of his lunch of twelve months before.

Speaking one day of this incident to Melville D. Landon, who was known to the lecture platform as Eli Perkins, prompted him to tell me that a few evenings before he had read to his wife an article regarding a monument which it was proposed to erect to the memory of their deceased friend, Josh Billings. After some talk and a period of meditation he asked her very seriously, "My dear, do you think the public will ever erect a monument to my memory?" "Dear Eli," she replied, "that would hardly be proper." "Why?" asked the astonished Eli. "Because you haven't any," declared the wife and with truth, Mr. Landon admitted.

Along the banks of trout brooks I have picked up many lost articles, each telling its graphic story of a more or less ruined day. You sit by the water in the shade to replace a frayed leader joint or attach a different fly or to do any one of a dozen or more things as required. Having completed the job you glance upstream at the very instant a fish leaps at a fluttering insect. The entrancing vision knocks all deliberation galley-west and off you go in quest of the crimson flecked beauty. On and on you travel. Finally the return of a normal pulse prompts you to investigate the thought which has been telling you right along that you have left something behind. You nervously slap the place where your fly-box should be. It is not there! Back you trudge anxiously and with eyes now totally blind to the charming milieu which delighted you so much only a few minutes before. You remember exactly where you left the priceless essential for your happiness and are overjoyed to find it awaiting you, or you cannot recall the place and your vain search portends disappointment for at least the rest of the day.

All this may be obviated simply and most effectively. Through the front of my coat are several punched metal eyelets. From these are suspended

stout bits of cord attached to such precious things as fly-boxes and leader boxes, which are placed in suitable pockets. I sometimes inadvertently hide my surgical scissors in the spongy moss beside me after snipping off the protruding tip of a leader knot, but when I get up to resume fishing they come along with me and tap at my hip until restored to their berth. There is always a way of attaching to your person anything worth saving. Boxes for flies and leaders are usually made of aluminum or other light metal. A hole may easily be punched in them and a brass eyelet inserted with the small implement used by attorneys for fastening legal papers together. A hard knot at the end of the cord inside the box and a slip-knot underneath the coat eyelet permit of easy engaging and disengaging.

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Fish should be dressed before you leave the stream, if not as caught. This will aid in preserving your catch if it is to be taken home, or if it is to augment the bill-of-fare where you are stopping the considerate act will place you at once upon the preferred list with the landlady. Food in a captured fish's stomach, having been in process of digestion, decomposes first of all and, in warm weather, soon

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contaminates the flesh. This is evidenced by discoloration and by the ribs leaving the flesh.

You sit on the bank with feet in the stream and dump the creel at your side. First of all come the fish interlarded with vegetation, now wilted and soiled, and last of all a rubber sponge and a small, sharp-pointed kitchen knife such as is used for paring potatoes. The sponge and knife are tied to the creel by separate cords three feet long. The empty creel is lowered into the flowing water and with the sponge is washed clean of exudations. Beside you there is a clump of fern or lush water grass that grows in hummocks. Cut a liberal supply of either for a bottom layer and for keeping each fish separate from the others when replaced in the creel. Remove the eyes with the knife point; enter it into the vent and make a clean cut up the belly into the gill-cover at the base of the lower jaw; a deft twist will pull the gills out with the entrails; scrape away the clotted blood under the membrane along the vertebra; wipe off all excess moisture with the sponge and place the fish in the creel. If you are to start for home next morning and wish to take your catch along, lower the creel of fish by rope close to the surface of the water in the well where it will keep cold if no refrigerator is available. Be-

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fore you are ready to start away wipe each fish dry with a clean, lintless towel and wrap it in waxed paper; wrap all together in several thicknesses of news or other heavier paper and keep the bundle as much away from the sun and the heat of the engine as possible. Dryness and chill will prolong their freshness beyond the power of an ice-pack. During warm weather it is very difficult to get a catch home in good condition. A Thermos pail is an ideal carrier but it is a very cumbersome addition to an already extensive outfit.

THE END





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